

STATE

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MAGAZINE

Focus On feature highlights
allies, partners, role models



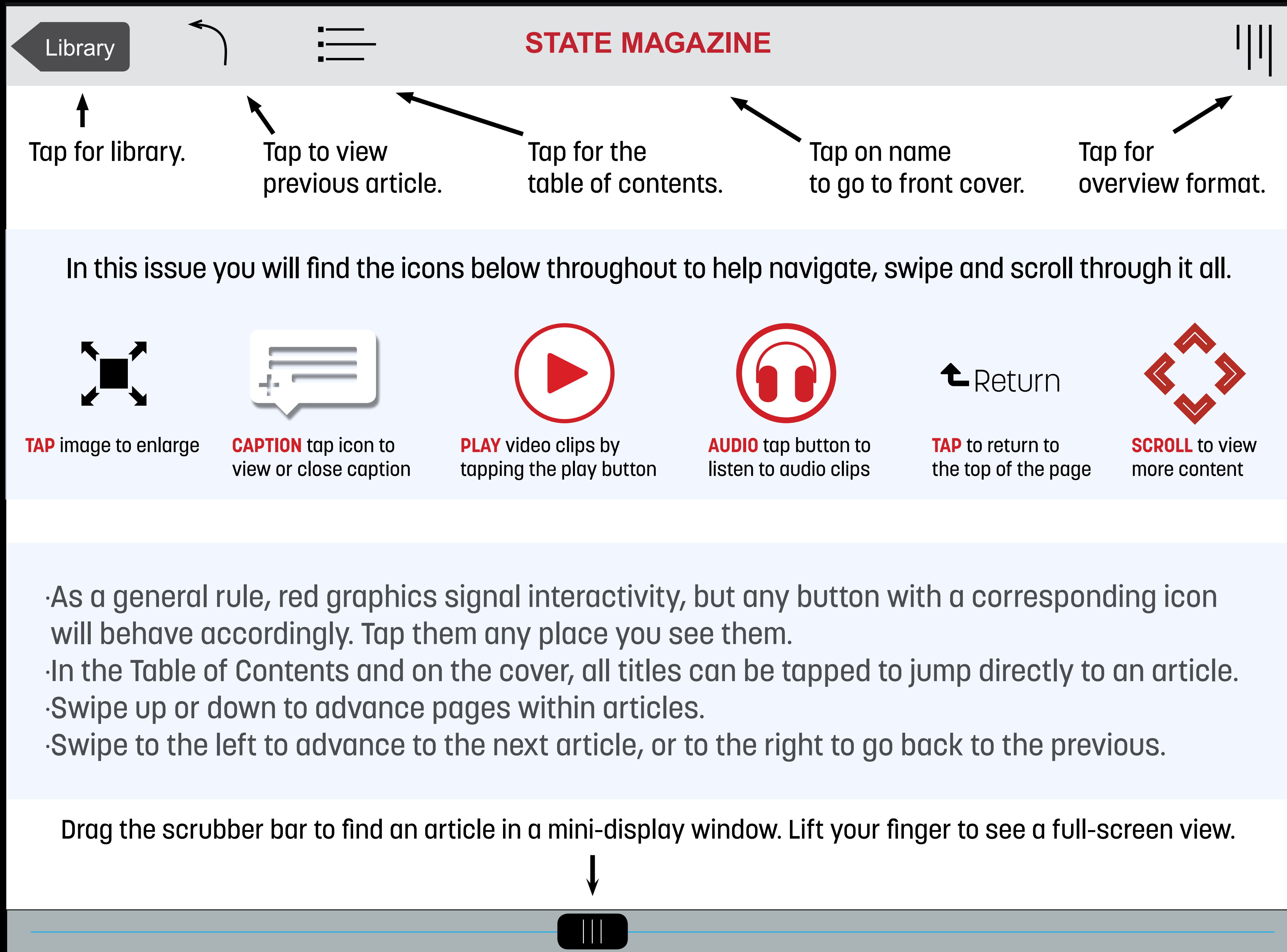
A HELPING HAND

Department assists internally displaced people in Iraq



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Roosevelt House is the chief of mission residence in Curaçao.

Photo by Patricia R. Morales and Solzmaz Shafini

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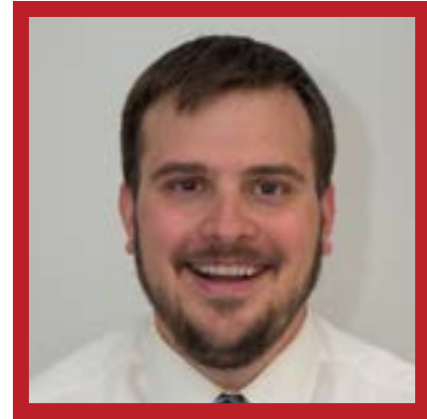
End State



On the cover

U.S. Department of State assists internally displaced people in Iraq.

STATE MAGAZINE



Isaac D. Pacheco
Editor-in-Chief
pachecoi2@state.gov



Ed Warner
Deputy Editor
warneres@state.gov



Michael Hahn
Associate Editor
hahnmg@state.gov



Luis A. Jimenez, Jr.
Art Director
jimenezla@state.gov

Submissions

For details on submitting articles to *State Magazine*, request guidelines by email at statemagazine@state.gov or download them from state.gov/statemag.

2401 E Street NW, Room H232
Washington DC 20037
statemagazine@state.gov

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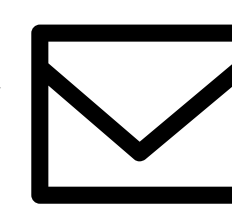
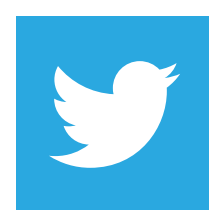
**The submission deadline for the February issue is December 20.
The deadline for the March issue is January 20.**

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This group portrait of the Slovak National Sledge Hockey Team includes Hannah, second from left in back row, and Emerson, who has a "C" on his jersey and is sixth from the right in the second row.

Photo by Igor Kupčo

ECA Envoys Promote Sledge Hockey

Slovakia has produced many hockey greats, but sledge hockey, a variant played on ice sleds (or sledges), wasn't widely known there until U.S. Paralympic gold medalists Lonnie Hannah and Bradley Emmerson arrived to promote the sport they love and advocate for disability rights.

With assistance from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' SportsUnited program, the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava hosted the American envoys for a visit that took them from Bratislava to Banska Bystrica and Dolny Kubin, the home of Slovakia's National Sledge Hockey Team.

The envoys spoke with hundreds of young Slovaks in high schools and at ice rinks about how sports changed their lives. "I met someone who introduced me to adaptive sports," Hannah told one audience, "and I found out I could do anything I wanted to do; I just had to do it a little bit differently."

In Dolny Kubin, Hannah and Emmerson trained with the Slovak National Sledge Hockey Team and presented it with a check for \$10,800 to purchase sledge hockey equipment. They conducted an exhibition during a Slovak Champions League match that was attended by 2,500 fans, visited the National Rehabilitation Center and met with Slovak Paralympic athletes.

Their visit coincided with the finalization of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Slovak Hockey Association and Slovak Paralympic Committee to cooperate on expanding interest in the sport. Slovak media covered the visit, too, raising awareness of disability issues in Slovakia.

With their engaging style and gold medal attitudes, ECA's Sports Envoys opened minds across the country to the challenges people with disabilities face, and to what's possible when societies are more inclusive. ■






Photo by Kymberly Tiffany

Retired FSO Gary Cook, now an executive coach, was among the speakers in October at Main State who addressed work-life and wellness issues. Cook told attendees to assess what work-life and wellness looks like for them, noting that this concept changes for each person over time. He and others spoke as part of the Department's Work Life Wellness Month.

A highlight of the month was a panel of speakers on how to leverage the strengths of each generation in a workplace. The panel included consultants Anne Loehr, Kehli Cage and Heather Martin, who are, respectively, mentoring, partnership and sponsorship directors for the nonprofit Young Government Leaders (YGL). Also on the panel were Stefano Rivolta, new media director in the Bureau of Human Resources (HR), and Bridget Roddy, Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS) program manager in the Bureau of Information Resources Management.

Cage told attendees “communications is key” in a multigenerational work environment, while Rivolta said HR is looking at the private sector’s recruitment and retention best practices. Martin said YGL has 10,000 members nationally and represents “a good area for [those seeking] support.” Roddy said the VSFS can help offices “bridge skills gaps” by providing online interns.

Panelists discussed age biases in the workplace, developing the skills to mentor and interact with each generation, and how to communicate well with each generation and navigate conflicts.

Also highlighted during the month were the ongoing yoga, ballet, Zumba, meditation, modern dance and martial arts practices engaged in by Washington-area employees, and the volleyball and soccer groups that compete on the National Mall. A full listing of the month's activities is on Diplopedia. 



Kralev addresses the Ralph Bunche Library audience Oct. 25
Photo by Luis Jimenez

Author Offers Look at FSO Life

At the Ralph Bunche Library in October, journalist-turned-author Nicholas Kralev spoke of his latest book, “Diplomats in the Trenches,” which examines the careers and day-to-day lives of 15 active-duty U.S. diplomats. The book encompasses several ambassadors and one assistant secretary, Victoria Nuland, but most of those profiled are midlevel officers, who tell of the challenges and rewards of their profession.

Kralev, who visited more than 90 posts over the past decade, says diplomats’ work is poorly understood by most Americans, especially the work of FSOs in the field. He believes Americans would be surprised by the range of FSOs’ activities and the skills and risks involved. Average Americans, Kralev writes in his book, may not understand diplomacy, “but they do relate to other people’s stories—and diplomats have incredible stories to tell.” FSOs today, he says, are likely “to be targeted by terrorists, carjacked or exposed to severe pollution and epidemic diseases.”

In one chapter, he focuses on a war zone—Iraq—and FSO Matthew Ference’s mostly improvised efforts to implement public affairs programs there, while living out of a 200 sq. ft. trailer. Another profile, of Yuri Kim, tracks her career path from Korea to China to Turkey, pointing out the challenges of raising a family on the go and keeping in touch with friends back home.

Kim is quoted as saying the word “diplomatic” is “not about being nice to people or not saying hurtful things. In fact, in the jobs that I’ve had to do, we’ve had difficult and sometimes combative conversations. ... It’s about talking to someone so that guns don’t get pulled out. It’s a way to avoid or end conflict, and to get people to compromise.” ■





Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield speaks to African delegations at the AGOA opening ceremony in the Loy Henderson Auditorium Sept. 26.

State Department photo

Forum Highlights African Trade

Trade delegations from across Africa came to Department of State headquarters Sept. 26 for the 15th annual U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum. Focused on maximizing American trade and investment, the forum brought U.S. and African officials together with civil society and private sector representatives to discuss expanding commerce with Africa under the 2005 African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

AGOA has eliminated tariffs on thousands of products from eligible countries in Africa and established an incentive to increase investment in export industries. The act received a 10-year extension in 2015, encouraging long-term investments.

A recent U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) report, “Beyond AGOA: Looking to the Future of U.S.-Africa Trade and Investment,” outlines a path for advancing long-term U.S.-Africa trade beyond the expiration of the act and endorses greater cooperation in areas such as labor rights, investment, intellectual property and trade in services. Noting the rapid changes in Africa and in global trading relationships since 2000, Ambassador Michael Froman, the USTR, called on attendees to “think more broadly about the future of our relationship.”

The forum’s several side events, including the AGOA Civil Society Forum, a breakfast hosted by the Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues and AGOA, a Power Africa event, and the first AGOA Trade and Labor Ministerial meeting hosted by the Department of Labor.

Under AGOA, nonoil exports from Africa to the United States have more than tripled from \$1.3 billion in 2000 to \$4.1 billion in 2015, adding 300,000 jobs to sub-Saharan African economies. Beyond trade and investment, AGOA has spurred economic growth and advanced peace and security in Africa. ■





At the event welcoming OAA are, from left, its director, Stephen M. King; Greg Smith, deputy director of S/OCR; Bruce Williamson, deputy assistant secretary for Human Resources; and Director General Arnold Chacon.

Photo by Amanda Richard

Awareness Month Highlights New Office

October's celebration of the annual National Disability Employment Awareness Month included a special event officially welcoming the new Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (OAA) to the Department of State. Launched in 2016, OAA consolidates multiple programs providing services to such employees and applicants into a single office.

OAA, a Bureau of Human Resources unit, combines accessibility programs, such as those for compliance with the U.S. Code's Section 508 (requiring usable and accessible electronic and information technology), with the existing Video Captioning Program, which provides free closed captioning for videos, live webinars and events. Meanwhile, OAA's Accessibility Division will expand to include equal access to facilities and transportation, while the Disability and Reasonable Accommodations Division will continue to provide reasonable accommodations and assistive technology. OAA also promotes and encourages the hiring and recruitment of people with disabilities through Schedule A(u), a noncompetitive hiring authority for employing qualified individuals with disabilities.

Stephen M. King, OAA's director, comes from the Department of Defense, where he was the director of CAP, a centrally funded program that provides free assistive technology and training to wounded service members and employees. He has 18 years of experience in the federal government, human resources and disability services.

OAA says it will build and sustain an inclusive and diverse workforce, do outreach and webinars, streamline the reasonable accommodation processes and promote increased awareness of the Department's accessibility programs. More information on OAA is available on its website. ▣





An audience member praises the documentary "3 1/2 Minutes, Ten Bullets" during the Abuja International Film Festival.

Photo by Sani Mohammed

Abuja Filmmakers

The U.S. Embassy in Abuja in October partnered with Abuja's filmmakers to feature nine American documentaries at the 13th Abuja International Film Festival and the Abuja Film Village International. The four-day event was attended by more than 500 people, promoted American values and advanced the mission's goal of people-to-people engagement in Nigeria.

At the festival, the American film showcase opened in a ceremony in Abuja attended by more than 200 guests including senior government officials, civil society leaders, diplomats, media executives, writers and film professionals. Acting Public Affairs Officer Russell Brooks noted how the documentaries provide a mirror through which Americans can look at themselves and let the world judge American democracy and diversity. The documentaries were also publicized in traditional and social media, including the embassy's Facebook page, reaching 10,463 people.

Films screened included "Code: Debugging the Gender Gap," "3½ Minutes, Ten Bullets," "The Bad Kids," "Code Girl," "Catching the Sun," "Most Likely to Succeed," "All Rise," "Keepers of the Game" and "Right Footed." American filmmakers Keith Fulton and Lou Pepe also discussed their film, "The Bad Kids," via Google Hangout.

The film "Right Footed" tells the story of a woman who was born without arms but became a renowned motivational speaker, a mentor to disabled children and an activist, and learned to fly. After its showing, filmmaker Nick Spark described what motivated him to commit three years to completing the film, noting that one does not make such films in hopes of making millions of dollars but instead by the need to tell powerful and inspiring stories. ■



Direct from the D.G.

ARNOLD CHACON
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE



The Future Begins by Building a Strong Foundation

As 2016 draws to a close, we're laying the groundwork for a smooth transition while, at the same time, continuing ongoing efforts that will strengthen the Department and prepare our workforce to advance U.S. interests and values now and in the future. We've done a lot over the past two years. We've undertaken consequential Foreign Service reforms as part of a broader strategy to modernize and streamline processes so employees can better focus on furthering U.S. foreign policy priorities. We have increased opportunities for Civil Service career development and made it easier for the Department to tap into the experience and expertise of those employees.

None of this would have been possible without the dedicated efforts of our HR family and the strong support of Secretary Kerry, Deputy Secretary Higginbottom and Under Secretary Kennedy. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their unflinching commitment to increase workforce agility and versatility while supporting employee health and well-being. Our initiatives on diplomacy, the Foreign Service Family Reserve Corps (FSFRC) and work-life wellness, to name just a few, bear this out.

All Americans want growth and job creation. Last year's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review emphasized the Department's goal to contribute to national prosperity through diplomacy. Therefore, we've expanded opportunities for employee professional development in this area, including increasing detail assignments to other agencies and partnerships with state and local governments as well as the private sector. We want employees to have an enhanced understanding of what it takes to open markets for U.S. exports, ensure compliance with existing trade and other agreements, partner with cities and states to increase access for small businesses overseas, and promote the public-private collaboration that spawns innovation. Thanks to the Secretary's direction, we're better positioned to help our economy prosper in the 21st century.

Our family members represent a vast and deep talent pool, and the Department is committed to cultivating and drawing on their skills. With Under Secretary Kennedy's strong support, this year we launched the FSFRC to more quickly mobilize family members to fill important positions in missions overseas. Once fully implemented, the FSFRC will improve the hiring process, centralize the administration of family member employment and allow for efficiencies in security clearance processing. It's a smart way to do business.

Employee work-life balance and wellness are critical to our success as an organization, not nice-to-have extras. We care about our people and want them to thrive, and we also recognize what many in the private sector realized long ago: A happy, healthy, and highly engaged workforce is more productive and more creative. Deputy Secretary Higginbottom made work-life wellness a priority from day one. As a working mom with young children of her own, she championed flexible work arrangements, job-sharing, part-time work schedules and emergency back-up day care, lactation rooms for nursing mothers and a voluntary leave bank to help employees. The Deputy Secretary's culture-changing legacy will ensure the Department remains among the best places to work in the federal government.

As the Secretary emphasized on Nov. 9, the Department will "do everything we can to help the 69th Secretary of State get off to the smoothest possible start." It's our patriotic duty to guarantee a seamless and successful transition of power, one of the hallmarks of our great democracy. We should all be proud of our proven track record as effective professional public servants. ■

Arnold A. Chacon

Diversity Notes

JOHN M. ROBINSON
OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS



Need a Different Perspective? Ask an Intern or New Employee

Today, we have five distinct generations working side by side in our workforce. This diversity is an unprecedented gift. Today's leaders have more than 60 years of intergenerational brain power to call upon. But the challenge is how to effectively access and process that power. How can leaders obtain the perspective of new midlevel employees, as well as the newest and least experienced staff members? It makes sense to put extra effort into getting the best input and feedback from employees at all levels, especially the most recent hires, as well as interns, because they have not yet been indoctrinated about what they should not notice.

One excellent way to get feedback is to make sure employees get training, professional development and learning opportunities. This helps employees gain new perspectives, think creatively, sharpen their analytical focus and better understand the Department of State culture. How does one get input from the newest employees and interns? In the Office of Civil Rights (S/OCR), we started a weekly Interns' Hour devoted entirely to engaging interns, hearing their observations, responding to their questions and mentoring them. This regularly planned interaction with interns has been useful for all of our staff, who are all encouraged to participate.

As a result of modeling an appreciation for two-way feedback from new employees, S/OCR's 2015 summer interns created an Intern Hour Guidebook (on our website at <http://socr.state.sbu/ocr/>) to capture their thoughts, research, trials, errors and advice for future interns (though managers might want to take note, too). Here are some of their reflections: "I want my supervisor to remember me," "I hope my work during the internship makes a difference" and "I want feedback on how I come across."

Another great outcome of this type of discussion between generations highlighted the importance of helping new employees acclimate to the Department, which benefits the employee and the office. This led to a guidebook article on how volunteering to help at Department events provides opportunities to learn about foreign policy themes, network, appreciate the importance of protocol and see how events are organized and run.

Taking volunteering one step further, another way of engaging the Department's newest workforce members is to encourage them to get involved in one of the Department's 13 Employee Affinity Groups (EAGs), especially the Council of Career Entry Professionals. EAGs promote internal networking, career development and community service, and are helpful in retention, recruitment, morale, skill development and training initiatives. They provide a way for employees at all levels to connect and contribute to fostering diversity in the Department. Encouraging new employees to participate in EAGs helps harness new perspectives and multiplies the benefits of having a diverse, intergenerational workforce.

For those of us who have been at the Department for a while, this kind of outreach to interns and new employees, who represent our many different generations, might take some personal effort. Do you recall what it was like to be new to the Department? If you can recall, share what you learned from your first experiences with an intern or a new employee. And, even if you can't remember being new to State, ask that intern or new employee to share what he or she is noticing and experiencing. Take a page from our Intern Hour Guidebook and invite an intern or new employee to lunch. Start the conversation and you'll be surprised what you can learn. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John M. Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.



FOCUS ON

The

Baltic States

Allies, partners, role models

By Ben Ziff, deputy assistant secretary of state, Nordic-Baltic Affairs

Aug. 23, 1989, was a Wednesday like no other. On that day, 2 million Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians joined hands and formed a human chain known as “the Baltic Way,” in a peaceful attempt to retake their countries from the grip of the Soviet Union and reclaim their right to live freely. Some were inspired by the songs of their proud cultures, others by solidarity with free peoples everywhere. All were driven by the spirit of democracy that continues to guide them today.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have long linked east to west and north to south, and formed part of an ancient trading route “from the Vikings to the Greeks.” Even after these republics were occupied by the Soviets, their flags flew in the Department of State, waiting for the day when they could again fly freely in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius. With regained independence, each country has rapidly modernized its economy and grown and diversified its civil society, and each has become an important EU member and valued NATO ally. The Baltic states stand as examples of shared democratic values and of the power of the European project.

This transformation has been remarkable. Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius are vibrant European capitals brimming with new enterprises,



Ben Ziff, deputy assistant secretary for Nordic-Baltic Affairs



Riga



Tallinn



Vilnius



rich cultural outlets and populations determined to maintain their hard-won freedoms. Nothing highlights their progress better than their leadership on the global stage: Lithuania became the first post-Soviet state to hold the EU Presidency, ascending to it in 2013; Latvia held the EU presidency in 2015; and Estonia will hold it in 2017.

NATO stands at the center of our partnership, guaranteeing the security of the Baltic states and underpinning their contributions to the security of the transatlantic alliance. The United States has increased cooperation through more than \$100 million in new security assistance to help bolster the capabilities of our Baltic allies, build resilience and deter aggression. Valuable Baltic contributions to missions in Afghanistan and Iraq enhance this unity and embody their close partnership with the United States and the alliance as a whole.

Vice President Joe Biden underscored the U.S. commitment to the security of the Baltic States during his recent visit to Riga. While there, he met with Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Latvian President Raimonds Vejonis and Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaite. All of the Baltic leaders agreed on the importance of enhanced cooperation not only with the United States, but also with each other. The vice president stressed the importance of expanding such regional collaboration, including on infrastructure and energy projects, border and cyber security efforts, and in countering propaganda. “Together, we’re taking important steps to strengthen all of our defenses and show a strong deterrent commitment,” he said, “so neither Russia, nor any other nation, can ever question the resolve or the capability of this alliance.”

The recent histories of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania demonstrate the power of civic action and the result of concerted effort to make these countries vibrant democracies, innovative economies and influential allies of the United States. We look forward to growing those transatlantic ties even more broadly into the 21st century. ■



Estonia

Leveraging a Baltic partner's successes



By Natalie Balents, intern, and David Wacker,
assistant public affairs officer, U.S. Embassy Tallinn

Former Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves famously once remarked that he hoped Estonia would become just “another boring Nordic country.” Through innovation and determination, this nation of 1.3 million people, one of the smallest in the EU, has achieved remarkable success on issues ranging from anti-corruption and good governance to energy independence and environmental protection—issues that have challenged many post-Soviet regimes in their transition to more pluralistic societies.

With due respect to President Ilves, it’s anything but boring.

Estonia’s experience with foreign occupations has taught it an important lesson: Perseverance and strength are two of the most reliable guarantors of independence. Since 2004, that strength has come from the NATO alliance, to which Estonia remains steadfastly committed. Besides being one of the few NATO countries to achieve the alliance’s goal of each member spending 2 percent of its GDP on defense, and having done so for the past five years, Estonia has also been a significant contributor to NATO missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Having a committed partner has

Opening Spread: Tallinn Town Hall is at the heart of the city’s well-preserved, medieval Old Town.

Photo by Tim Benedict Pou

Ambassador Melville and Ambassador Pettit, third and forth from left, along with the Estonian and Latvian chiefs of defense, welcome the soldiers of the Dragoon Ride across the Latvian border into Estonia.

Photo by Sandy Jacobs





Sunflower on Laulupea Street in Tallinn's city center.
Photo by PAS Tallinn



proven helpful for global security operations too, with Estonia developing strong niche capabilities in cyber defense, explosive ordnance detection and demining.

In the wake of Russia's annexation of Crimea, this same resolve has led Estonia to seek an enhanced bilateral security relationship with the United States. For the embassy, this has meant efforts to facilitate defensive capabilities, for example, through the recent sale of Javelin missiles to Estonia and supporting the ongoing deployment of U.S. troops to Estonia. Defense Attaché Col. David Wiseman noted: "Be it through heel-to-toe rotations of U.S. soldiers in Estonia, the recent sale of Javelin missiles, or exercises on land, in the air or at sea, we have a strong relationship with Estonia that both reassures our allies and provides credible deterrence."

Estonia's perseverance and entrepreneurial spirit make it a strong and valued partner of the United States. Cases in point include its support of anti-corruption programs in Ukraine, the Freedom Online Coalition (a partnership of 30 governments dedicated to open and free Internet access), and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Clearly, Estonia's commitment to our shared goals creates an incredibly strong foundation for the bilateral relationship, politically and economically. The Department has encouraged Estonia's own anti-corruption efforts, most recently by providing Estonian law enforcement officials with a 10-day program in the United States.

After regaining independence in 1991, Estonia's new government quickly realized that using information technology to promote transparency and trust in new institutions was cost-effective. That decision led the country to develop an e-governance platform and extensive IT capacity that has fueled business growth (think Skype and TransferWise, both started in Estonia) and cybersecurity expertise. Today, Estonia hosts the Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence, a NATO-accredited forum for addressing challenging theoretical and legal issues in the cyber field.

One of the most memorable parts of visiting Estonia for many visitors is the e-Estonia Showroom, a digital and innovation hub in Tallinn that introduces

Thousands of people gather to watch and participate in the Estonian Song and Dance Celebration, which takes place once every five years.

Photo by Egon Tintse



Tallinn's city wall captures the city's medieval charm.

Photo by PAS Tallinn





U.S. soldiers delighted the crowds with their creative vehicles at the annual Narva Soap Box Derby, relishing their role as peacekeepers. The Ivangorod Fortress lies just over the Narva River behind them in Russia.
Photo by PAS Tallinn





In addition to hiking, running and skiing in Estonia's beautiful forests, embassy staff also helped to replant trees on Earth Day. Here, Ambassador Melville, at right, and local mayor Urmas Kirtsu add one more tree to the forest near Kuusalu.

Photo by Pas Tallinn

business and political leaders to the country's e-governance solutions. Estonians are able to pay their taxes, vote, claim health insurance benefits, sign official documents, and more, all online using their government-issued digital identities. E-governance and the efficiency and transparency that come with it are something that Estonia is eager to export to other interested nations, and the U.S. Mission is equally eager to promote. Thus, the post has partnered with the e-Governance Academy to help finance projects that will assist other nations, including Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, in adding e-governance capabilities. Estonia is also keen to offer its e-solutions to individuals as well, with more than 10,000 non-Estonians taking up Estonian "e-Residency," enabling anyone in the world to establish and administer an Estonian company. Economic Officer Nicole Johnson explained: "Through e-Residency, Estonia hopes to entice foreigners to register businesses in Estonia as a gateway to the EU market."

Having transitioned to a free market democracy, Estonia is an incubator of high-tech startups and a magnet for foreign direct investment. The World Bank's ease of doing business index ranks the nation 16 out of 189, between France and Germany, making it a





welcoming, protective and uncomplicated environment for businesses. The embassy encourages further development in Estonia's business environment and works with the American Chamber of Commerce and Baltic-American Freedom Foundation to sponsor the annual Estonian-American Innovation Award. It also has a program to foster business and English-language skills for 120 Estonian students.

Most investment and economic activity is concentrated in Tallinn and the university town of Tartu. Other areas, including Narva and Ida Viru County, the mostly Russian-speaking border region on the frontier of NATO and the EU, have experienced more uneven development. These areas are the focus of Embassy Tallinn's efforts in promoting English, entrepreneurship and STEM-related programs, including through an expanded American Space in Narva.

The quality of life in Estonia features a sylvan natural environment, with forests covering more than half of the country and providing idyllic settings for leisure or economic activity. The wood-product sector is a growing part of Estonia's economy and exports, and the country has

City lights glow warmly in a winter night in Tallinn.

Photo by Mariusz kluzniak



succeeded in sustainable forestry management. Forests are also central to the Estonian identity; a favorite forest pastime is picking mushrooms and berries. “It’s the national sport,” said Cultural Assistant Tiiu Vitsut. “By nature, Estonians are ‘korilased’ [gatherers] who pick everything that they can eat, and have survived hard times because of that.” But it’s not just the locals who turn to the forests and nature for a reprieve from city life. Political Officer Sandy Jacobs remarked: “On a personal level, I love that I can walk almost 10 minutes in any direction and be in natural environment, even in Tallinn.”

Situated just 500 miles south of the Arctic Circle, Estonia’s environment and culture are shaped by extreme variability in daylight, with “white nights” that never turn completely dark dominating the summer months, and days offering just a few hours of light in the deep of winter. As a result, the brief summer features a huge variety of festivals that celebrate food, folk music, American cars, surfing and farm visits. The summer is also a great time to enjoy cycling or running on Tallinn’s extensive trail network, though hardy residents undaunted by ice and cold continue to do so in the winter as well. For a warmer winter activity, there’s always a sauna nearby; no tour in Estonia would be complete without trying a local

The Alexander Nevsky Cathedral is Tallinn’s largest and grandest orthodox cupola cathedral. It is dedicated to Saint Alexander Nevsky who in 1242 won the Battle of the Ice on Lake Peipus, in the territorial waters of present-day Estonia.

Photo by Jirmania



“suitsusaun,” or smoke sauna, and dipping into a wood-fired hot tub. Winter begins in earnest just after Estonian’s turn back their clocks in late October and the sun starts setting before the workday ends, but this also marks the beginning of one of the region’s largest festivals, the aptly named Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival. For two weeks in November, thousands of film fans make the most of Estonia’s long nights, enjoying hundreds of films at screenings held across the country.

Once, times were so difficult in Estonia that local staff shared their ration cards with the ambassador, so he could stand in line to buy bread for his family. However, today it is abundantly clear that Estonia and its people have made incredible progress in less than a generation. The innovation taking place here is a harbinger of future success, and the United States will continue to find a dedicated partner across a wide range of projects, priorities and people in Estonia. ■



In August, Mission Estonia staff gathered at the ambassador’s residence to commemorate 25 years since the embassy reopened after Soviet rule in 1991. Posing here are some of Tallinn’s longest-serving local employees, many of whom have worked since then, together with four of the original American officers.

Photo by PAS Tallinn



Estonia



Capital:
Tallinn

Government Type:
Parliamentary republic

Area:
45,228 sq km

Population:
1,258,545

Major urban areas:
Tallinn 391,000

Ethnic groups:
Estonian 68.7%, Russian 24.8%, Ukrainian 1.7%,
Belarusian 1%, Finn 0.6%,
other 1.6%, unspecified 1.6%

Languages:
Estonian (official) 68.5%,
Russian 29.6%, Ukrainian 0.6%,
other 1.2%, unspecified 0.1%

Religions:
Lutheran 9.9%, Orthodox 16.2%,
other Christian (including Methodist,
Seventh Day Adventist, Roman Catholic,
Pentecostal) 2.2%, other 0.9%,
none 54.1%, unspecified 16.7%

Exports (commodities):
machinery and electrical equipment,
food products and beverages, mineral fuels,
wood and wood products, metals, furniture,
vehicles and parts, chemicals

Export partners:
Sweden 18.8%, Finland 16%, Latvia 10.4%,
Russia 6.7%, Lithuania 5.9%, Germany 5.2%,
Norway 4.1%

Imports:
machinery and electrical equipment, mineral fuels,
food and food products, vehicles, chemical products,
metals

Import partners:
Finland 14.5%, Germany 11%, Lithuania 9%,
Sweden 8.5%, Latvia 8.3%, Poland 7.4%,
Russia 6.1%, Netherlands 5.5%, China 4.8%

Currency:
Euro

Internet country code:
.ee

* The CIA World Factbook



Latvia

Transformed by independence, still wary of neighbor to the east



By Matt Thompson, assistant public affairs officer, U.S. Embassy Riga

Latvia, a Baltic country that regained its independence in 1990, has attained a high standard of living without the high costs found in Western Europe and Scandinavia. A member of NATO and the European Union since 2004, Latvia recently joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The country serves as a role model for others in the region still coping with Soviet legacy issues. The United States has been Latvia's steadfast ally since the Soviet occupation, and the relationship is even closer following Russia's aggression in Ukraine two years ago. Strengthening security cooperation, deepening economic ties and supporting civil society in Latvia are the most pressing issues for both countries today.

Opening Spread: The House of the Blackheads is one of Riga's most iconic landmarks. It is also famous for allegedly inventing one of the world's most popular holiday traditions—the Christmas tree. According to legend, in 1510, members of the Blackheads House decided to be merry and decorate a tree with paper flowers.

Photo by Matt Thompson



PAO Leslie Goodman greets students at a local school in Riga on Sept. 1, which always the first day of the school year. Flowers for teachers and speakers are traditional for the day.

Photo by Andris Arhomkins



“It is truly an honor to be the U.S. Ambassador to Latvia—a stunning country with a beautiful culture, and a close friend and ally,” said Ambassador Nancy Bikoff Pettit.

Russia’s attempted illegal annexation of Crimea has resulted in a significant increase in U.S. activity in the Baltics. Ship visits, military exercises and delegations sent from Washington, Latvia and its Baltic neighbors have become the focal points of U.S. diplomacy in Europe. The grit and determination of the Latvian people, despite a population decline and economic hardships, have made their nation a trusted partner to both NATO and the United States.

“Nobody could have envisioned how far Latvia has come in the last two decades,” said Deputy Political Officer Vanessa Acker, who was an exchange student in Latvia during the 1990s. “Latvians were still looking for their identity back then, but today Latvia is very much a modern European democracy.”

Although Latvia boasts the seventh fastest Internet connection speeds in the world and has the modern amenities of Western Europe, many Latvians prefer the simplicity of nature. The country is blessed with an abundance of lakes and rivers, forests and castles, a landscape like something out of “Lord of the Rings.”

Roughly the size of West Virginia, Latvia has 1.8 million inhabitants and sits at the center of the Baltic region with Estonia to the north and Lithuania to the south. Belarus and Russia border to the east. The

The stately Rundale Palace, one of the architectural jewels of Latvia, is located in southern part of the country and is one of the most popular tourist destinations. Built in 1768, Rundale was designed by the Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli, the same man who built the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg.

Photo by Heather Hall



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Swans and ducks gather along the banks of the Daugava River in Riga. Many different types of birds make this their home throughout the year, despite the Daugava sometimes freezing over in the winter.

Photo by Heather Hall



nation has four largely untouched national parks, and more than half the country is covered in forest, providing ample opportunities for hiking and camping in the summer and skiing and snowshoeing in the winter. Its Baltic Sea coast remains devoid of large-scale development (an unforeseen product of the Soviet Union's restrictions on its Western fronts) and is open for trekking along pristine, empty beaches.

While Latvia continues to develop its eco-tourism industry, most tourists come to visit Riga, the shining capital city on the Daugava River. Old Riga, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a delightful maze of cobblestoned streets, castles and churches that gives visitors a taste of the city's medieval past. Quaint cafés, cozy bakeries, lively beer gardens and great music make Riga one of Europe's hidden gems. For lovers of architecture, Riga is a mecca of Art Nouveau, boasting more than 750 buildings in that early 20th-century style—the highest concentration in the world.

Nearly half of Latvia's population lives in or around Riga, yet the city has retained its small-town charm. Parks and walking paths make it easy to get

around on foot or by bike. Public transportation is abundant and traffic jams are rare. Throughout the summer, the entire country celebrates the warm weather with an endless tally of concerts, festivals and fairs, all wonderful opportunities to become acquainted with Latvia's culture and hospitable and friendly people.

Latvia has struggled for its independence. Since German traders arrived in 1201, it has frequently been occupied by foreign powers. Germans, Poles, Swedes and Russians all occupied Latvia at various times, and it wasn't until 1918 that an independent country emerged. That independence was short-lived as Latvia suddenly found itself





Embassy Riga volunteers haul wood they've chopped to provide heating during the winter for a local orphanage. Embassy staff and U.S. soldiers have done this type of outreach work throughout the country.

Photo by Andris Arhomkins

within the Soviet sphere of influence, a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In 1941, the Nazis invaded Riga and held it until the Soviets took Latvia again at the end of World War II.

For 50 years, Latvians suffered under Soviet occupation as thousands of people were deported to Siberia and forced to relinquish their homes to the state. Because of its strategic deep-water ports, the Soviets transformed Latvia into a military and industrial hub and resettled people there from all over the Soviet Union. By 1980, native Russian speakers comprised almost half of Latvia's population.

As the Soviet Union began to crumble in the late 1980s, Latvians, together with their Baltic neighbors, rose up to protest the illegal occupation by doing what they do best: singing. On Aug. 23, 1989, approximately 2 million people from Tallinn to Riga to

Vilnius sang together and joined hands to create a human chain 420 miles long. The peaceful protest—known as the Baltic Way—drew attention around the world and marked the beginning of the end for the Soviets in the Baltics. In 1990, Latvia declared its independence.

Over the past two decades, Latvia has steadily rebuilt itself. The impact of the 2008–09 economic crisis, which saw the country lose nearly a quarter of its GDP, can still be felt. However, the economy has grown and unemployment has stabilized.

Embassy Riga's more than 140 employees work closely with their Latvian counterparts to advance a number of important issues. With Russia's provocative actions in the region, Embassy Riga has stepped up engagement with the Latvian Ministry of Defense to help increase Latvia's military capabilities and capacity. Latvia participates in a number of bilateral and multilateral military exercises alongside NATO and



Right: Vice President Joe Biden takes a minute to meet the grandson of Dainis Ivans, a famous Latvian journalist who was instrumental in Latvia's independence movement in late 1980s. Ivans gave opening remarks before Vice President Biden's speech.
Photo by Andris Arhomkins

Bottom right: Latvians sing and dance in masks and costumes as they celebrate the winter solstice at the Latvian Ethnographic Open-Air Museum. Guests can buy handmade gifts, gingerbread and hot cider while learning more about the ancient solstice rituals.
Photo by Heather Hall

Below: Vice President Biden shakes hands with Latvian President Raimonds Vejonis during his recent visit to Riga in August.
Photo by Andris Arhomkins

U.S. soldiers. The U.S. Office for Defense Cooperation works closely with Embassy Riga and the Latvian government on civic engagement projects, such as remodeling local fire departments and refurbishing kindergartens.

Embassy Riga supports Latvia's efforts to improve border security, curb money laundering and public corruption, and advocate for the restitution of public and religious Jewish properties lost during World War II. The public affairs section plays a key role in supporting civil society leaders in tackling Latvia's most difficult problems. From financing the training of law enforcement personnel on how to help victims of domestic violence and trafficking, to providing assistance for organizations working with refugees, the embassy is an active and respected partner to many local agencies.

In addition to the gratifying work, employees and families enjoy Latvia's high standard of living, which includes clean air and water, low crime and affordable shopping. The Community Liaison Office regularly organizes such fun activities as horseback riding and brewery tours. Although Riga isn't a large city, embassy employees have a wide array of housing options, from high-ceilinged apartments in the Art Nouveau district to cozy condos on the island of Kipsala and larger homes outside the city among the pine trees. There are several quality schools in Riga, but most embassy children attend the International School of Latvia, an International Baccalaureate World School for grades K-12.



A blanket of snow covers the scenic town of Cesis, which was founded 800 years ago. With its stoic castle and lovely parks, Cesis is a favorite tourist destination for many.

Photo by Heather Hall

Latvia may be small and relatively unknown outside of Europe, but its genuine enthusiasm for people and nature leaves its mark on visitors, especially on Midsummer (June 23) when Latvians escape to the countryside to celebrate the summer solstice, better known as Jāņi (St. John's Day) or Līgo. Families and friends make garlands of oak leaves and wildflowers, which they wear on their heads just like their pagan ancestors did centuries ago. Deep in the forests, they stay up all night singing and dancing, enjoying delicious dark beer and eating homemade cheese seasoned with caraway seeds. The world has Latvians to thank for making sure that the midsummer sun always rises to start another day. ■



Latvia



Capital:
Riga

Government Type:
Parliamentary republic

Area:
64,589 sq km

Population:
1,965,686

Major urban areas:
Riga 621,000

Ethnic groups:
Latvian 61.1%, Russian 26.2%, Belarusian 3.5%, Ukrainian 2.3%, Polish 2.2%, Lithuanian 1.3%, other 3.4%

Languages:
Latvian (official) 56.3%, Russian 33.8%, other 0.6% (includes Polish, Ukrainian, and Belarusian), unspecified 9.4%

Religions:
Lutheran 19.6%, Orthodox 15.3%, other Christian 1%, other 0.4%, unspecified 63.7%

Exports (commodities):
foodstuffs, wood and wood products, metals, machinery and equipment, textiles

Export partners:
Lithuania 17.8%, Russia 11.5%, Estonia 11.1%, Germany 6.3%, Poland 5.6%, Sweden 5.2%, UK 5%, Denmark 4%

Imports:
machinery and equipment, consumer goods, chemicals, fuels, vehicles

Import partners:
Lithuania 16.9%, Germany 11.2%, Poland 10.5%, Russia 8.1%, Estonia 7.7%, Finland 5.2%, Netherlands 4%

Currency:
Euro

Internet country code:
.lv

* The CIA World Factbook



Lithuania

Land of natural wonders is strong regional ally



By Heather Steil, public affairs officer, U.S. Embassy in Vilnius

Living in Lithuania and working at Embassy Vilnius means enjoying all the advantages of being in a beautiful, historic European capital, minus the exorbitant prices of many other European cities. Embassy employees enjoy a high quality of life and ease of travel within Europe. A posting in Vilnius also means working in a unique geopolitical environment that presents a range of intriguing issues in which to engage.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Vilnius, particularly the old part of town, is the city’s quirky blend of historic and modern architecture. Much of the Old Town has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Centuries-old brick foundations, complemented by modern facades, give many buildings a unique, contemporary look with strong hints of past grandeur.

The personality of Lithuania is a mix of charm, generosity, reserve, creativity and an easygoing confidence. It is easy to fall under the spell of Vilnius, with its clean air and streets, safe neighborhoods, numerous parks and outdoor cafés. There is one catch—winters can be long, cold and gray. Luckily, that is a small price to pay for the pleasure of living and working here.

Opening Spread: People walk down cobblestone streets in beautiful Old Town Vilnius.

Photo by Howard Solomon

The Vilnius landscape is full of reminders of its history. Old castle towers and forts mingle with modern buildings.

Photo by Howard Solomon





A congressional delegation looks out over the Old Town of Vilnius from the bell tower of St. John's Church. In 2015, 43 VIPs, CODELs and StaffDels visited Lithuania.
Photo by U.S. Embassy Vilnius



Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and Latvian President Raimonds Vejonis lay flowers at the base of the Freedom Monument in central Riga.

Photo by U.S. Embassy Riga



Lithuania borders Latvia, Belarus, Poland, the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad and the Baltic Sea. The country may be small (just under 3 million people live in an area roughly the size of West Virginia), but it is a big player in the geopolitical issues of the Baltic and Nordic countries.

The United States refused to recognize the Soviet Union's annexation of Lithuania in 1940, flying its colors among the flags of nations in the Department's C Street lobby during 51 years of Soviet occupation. The Lithuanian people have never forgotten this symbolic gesture. Since the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1990, the United States has not only continued to support the country, it has also partnered with Lithuania in advancing peace and democratic values on a global scale. Over the past 25 years, Lithuania has developed into a thriving democratic society with a unique culture and language, educated citizenry and growing economy.

Although the Baltic states share a common history, Lithuania, like its neighbors, retains a distinct identity. Its language is considered to be the oldest Indo-European language still in use. Yet, it was the last country in Europe to adopt Christianity; the Catholic Church arrived in Lithuania after the Lutheran Church took hold in the other Baltic states, and Lithuania remains a predominantly Catholic nation today. Basketball, not soccer, is its "second religion."

Lithuanians are generally very pro-American and pro-U.S. policies. A friendly public that is receptive to the embassy's point of view allows for frequent and innovative public engagement. There are no restrictions on traveling within Lithuania, and the embassy takes advantage of the safe environment to do outreach in all corners of the country.

Lithuania's growth as a young republic offers many opportunities for officers to work on issues that support the U.S. priority of a Europe that is whole, free and at peace. The rising importance Washington places on the Baltic region is evident in the increasing number of high-level



An honor guard presents the colors during the USS Oscar Austin's visit to the port city of Klaipeda in July 2015.

Photo by U.S. Embassy Vilnius





Houston-based dance company Soul Street Dance holds a master class with talented young Lithuanian performers in Kaunas.
Photo by U.S. Embassy Vilnius





Deputy Chief of Mission Howard Solomon is interviewed at home by Lithuanian National Radio and Television.
Photo by U.S. Embassy Vilnius

visits. In August, Vice President Joe Biden met with the presidents of all three Baltic countries in Riga, Latvia. Embassy Vilnius supported eight congressional or staff delegations and special envoy visits in October alone. The U.S. Mission's priorities in Lithuania are wide-ranging.

The embassy works closely with government officials, the media, and private sector and civil society organizations to address such critical issues as energy security, corruption, human rights and Russian disinformation. Lithuania is an important NATO ally and an enthusiastic supporter of bilateral and multilateral military cooperation. Frequent training exercises ensure the continued readiness of Lithuanian, U.S. and NATO troops in the region.

Since the end of the 51-year Soviet occupation of Lithuania and the restoration of its independence, the United States has supported Lithuania's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions and has partnered with Lithuania in addressing many of today's challenges to democracy and security. Over the past 26 years, Lithuania has taken on increasingly prominent roles in transatlantic and global institutions to meet these challenges. It chaired the Community of Democracies (2009–2011) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2011. While it held the EU presidency, Lithuania championed democratic





The U.S. Embassy's Pol-Econ Chief Ryan Campbell reads a Lithuanian translation of the classic Dr. Seuss book, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas!" at a local orphanage.

Photo by U.S. Embassy Vilnius

principles in other countries of the former Soviet Union. In fact, it hosted the 2013 Eastern Partnership Summit when the Maidan Square protests began in Ukraine. During Lithuania's 2014–2015 tenure on the U.N. Security Council, it actively partnered with the United States to promote peace and advance human rights worldwide.

Over the past few years, Lithuania has also made impressive progress in diversifying its energy sources, bolstering its own energy security as well as that of the Baltic region. It opened a self-financed floating liquefied natural gas terminal in January 2015, decreasing its dependence on Russian gas from 100 percent to approximately 25 percent in 2016. In close cooperation with the EU, it is building gas and electricity links to its European neighbors, and thus helping create a more competitive regional energy market. Lithuania is rapidly transitioning from an energy island to a regional energy hub, becoming a model for others to do the same.

As NATO allies, the United States and Lithuania are committed to each other's security and the security of fellow member states. Since 2004, Lithuania has hosted the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission at its airbase in Siauliai, and since 2012, at the NATO Energy Security Center of Excellence. Lithuania sees a threat to its own hard-won independence in



Russia's recent aggressive actions in Eastern Europe. The United States and Lithuania, therefore, have been working closely to advance collective security in Lithuania and in the Baltic states. The United States has deployed a company-sized military unit to Lithuania and to other allies in NATO's Eastern Flank on a persistent, rotational basis since 2014, to conduct training and exercises in the region. U.S. forces cooperate with Lithuanian troops in a range of joint and multilateral exercises.

A visitor might walk right by the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius without realizing it. Centrally located but tucked away inconspicuously on a residential street, the embassy consists of four newly renovated buildings on beautifully maintained grounds. Fitness-minded employees can use the gym, indoor lap pool and sauna. Those who don't feel like leaving the embassy for lunch can eat at the embassy café. Staff housing is distributed between apartments in Old Town and just across the Neris River, one of nearly 800 rivers crisscrossing the entire country.

Vilnius itself offers a bountiful selection of things to do. There is always a new favorite restaurant, bakery, wine bar, beer house or coffee shop to discover, and plenty of historic sites to charm and educate visitors. There are, of course, the more modern forms of entertainment as well, such as movie theaters and shopping malls. On a warm summer day it is not unusual to see a sky full of hot-air balloons. Most impressively, Lithuania is a delight for backpackers, hikers and nature lovers with its woodlands and waterways. Nearly 3,000 lakes are enough to quench any outdoors-minded person's thirst for pastimes and sports.

While it's helpful to know conversational Lithuanian, and attempts to master the language are appreciated, English is widely spoken in Vilnius and throughout Lithuania. The service sector is well developed and generally of high quality. "Vilnius is a very special place—in just a year, it has captured my heart and it makes me sad to think that my time here will come to an end," said Pol-Econ Secretary Lauren Schaefer. "I have truly enjoyed building relationships with people here and exploring the history of the city."

Lithuania is truly one of Europe's last undiscovered gems. The staff of Embassy Vilnius is fortunate to reside in such a delightful city, where the work is fulfilling and the people are welcoming. Whether you come for a short visit or for a long-term assignment, Lithuania will not disappoint. ■



The U.S. and Lithuanian armed forces engage in frequent bilateral and multilateral military exercises and training, which has contributed to strong military cooperation.

Photo by U.S. Embassy Vilnius



Lithuania



Capital:
Vilnius

Government Type:
Semi-presidential republic

Area:
63,300 sq km

Population:
2,854,235

Major urban areas:
Vilnius 517,000

Ethnic groups:
Lithuanian 84.1%, Polish 6.6%,
Russian 5.8%, Belarusian 1.2%,
other 1.1%, unspecified 1.2%

Languages:
Lithuanian (official) 82%,
Russian 8%, Polish 5.6%,
other 0.9%, unspecified 3.5%

Religions:
Roman Catholic 77.2%, Russian
Orthodox 4.1%, Old Believer
0.8%, Evangelical Lutheran
0.6%, Evangelical Reformist
0.2%, other (including Sunni
Muslim, Jewish, Greek Catholic,
and Karaite) 0.8%, none 6.1%,
unspecified 10.1%

Exports (commodities):
refined fuel, machinery
and equipment, chemicals,
textiles, foodstuffs,
plastics

Export partners:
Russia 13.7%, Latvia
9.8%, Poland 9.7%,
Germany 7.8%, Estonia
5.3%, Belarus 4.6%,
UK 4.5%, US 4.4%,
Netherlands 4%

Imports:
oil, natural gas, machinery
and equipment, transport
equipment, chemicals,
textiles and clothing,
metals

Import partners:
Russia 16.9%, Germany
11.5%, Poland 10.3%,
Latvia 7.6%, Netherlands
5.1%, Italy 4.5%

Currency:
Euro

Internet country code:
.lt

* The CIA World Factbook



A Helping Hand

Responding to Iraq's humanitarian crisis

By John Underriner, senior coordinator for Refugee and IDP Affairs, Embassy Baghdad

How do you prepare for a million new internally displaced persons (IDPs), persons who are refugees in their own country? That's the question plaguing the humanitarian affairs community this year because millions of people are already refugees within Iraq, and up to a million more could end up fleeing the combat underway to push the terrorist group Da'esh out of northern Iraq.

There has been no comparable humanitarian crisis like this since World War II, and it will test the ability of relief agencies and governments.

Iraq's IDP crisis arises from efforts to push Da'esh, also called ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), out of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, which fell to Da'esh in 2014. More than 3.3 million persons have fled their homes since Da'esh began its advance, adding to the nation's already high total of refugees, a total that includes an estimated 1 million Iraqis displaced by previous conflicts and nearly 240,000 refugees from Syria.

The counteroffensive launched this year against Da'esh by the Iraqi government has liberated Fallujah and Ramadi, and several cities north of Baghdad, including Tikrit. But the fighting has also displaced more than 850,000 Iraqis. In June, the liberation of Fallujah led to nearly 90,000 new IDPs—half of whom fled over a three-day period, overwhelming local and international relief efforts.

As Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) fight to liberate Mosul, more than 1 million people from the region could become IDPs, by the U.N.'s estimate. It is estimated that a full 10 million people, nearly a third of the country's population, will need some form of humanitarian assistance.

In Baghdad and Washington, representatives of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), USAID's



Iraqi IDP children watch other children from afar at a school in the Harshm IDP camp outside Erbil.

Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Food For Peace (FFP), are working together to coordinate and manage U.S. humanitarian assistance. U.S. funding enables humanitarian workers to pre-position emergency food supplies and basic relief items. U.S. aid provides for basic health care, including maternal and child health care services. It also supports such functions as education and IDP-camp management, and provides psychosocial support and gender-based violence prevention and mitigation programs, as well as safe drinking water, clean latrines and shower facilities.

Only about 14 percent of Iraq's IDPs reside in camps established by the U.N., the Iraqi Red Crescent Society or donor nations, such as the United Arab Emirates. The rest live in an estimated 3,800 locations spread throughout the country, including host communities, empty public buildings, mosques and churches. This dispersal, as well as the security situation in many parts of the country, adds to the challenges of providing and monitoring U.S. assistance. U.S. Mission personnel in Iraq can travel to many locations in the Independent Kurdish Republic (IKR), where most refugees and nearly a third of IDPs have found refuge. However, mission personnel face limits on their movements in other areas, due to security precautions; these areas include Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, where over a million IDPs are sheltering.

PRM and USAID officials therefore work closely with the international organizations and local and international NGOs that aid IDPs, gaining information on the conditions of IDPs and their concerns and assistance needs. While it would be best to obtain this information directly from IDPs, Iraq's high-threat environment instead calls for creativity in monitoring and evaluating U.S. assistance programs, especially those undertaken with NGO partners. Where possible, PRM and USAID compare information from many sources, and when direct monitoring is impossible for security reasons, they turn to trusted third parties and the contracted services of trained Iraqi monitors, who visit U.S.-funded projects and submit written reports with photos. The partners also, by phone and social media, contact the programs' beneficiaries for their views.

The United States is the largest contributor of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Iraqis, providing more than \$1 billion since October 2014. This includes \$181



Senior Refugee Coordinator John Underriner, center in blue shirt, visits a classroom at the Basirma refugee camp.

million in additional life-saving assistance that Deputy Secretary Antony Blinken announced during his September visit to Iraq. "The new funding enables the pre-positioning of emergency food assistance and basic relief items to displaced Iraqis in preparation for the Mosul campaign," Blinken said. This funding will help meet IDP's critical humanitarian needs.

He said U.S. funding also buys and distributes emergency relief and shelter supplies, and will fund “essential water, sanitation and hygiene services that will provide displaced Iraqis with safe drinking water, clean latrines and shower facilities.”

The United States is also supporting efforts to stabilize Iraq, once the fight to liberate it from Da’esh ends. It’s doing so through two U.N. funding mechanisms, the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS) and Funding Facility for Expanded Stabilization (FFES). These funds will help restore essential services, provide small grants to businesses, assist local governments with recovery, support reconciliation and correct some damage to infrastructure.

The United States is also involved in resettlement of Iraqi refugees. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program prioritizes the most vulnerable individuals, those who have faced persecution or have a well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. This activity occurs, of course, in a manner consistent with U.S. national security.

Many of those now being considered for U.S. resettlement are members of religious minority communities, including Chaldean Catholics, Roman Catholics and other Christians, as well as the Yezidis, who have suffered atrocities under Da’esh. Of the more than 134,000 Iraqi refugees admitted to the United States since 2007, nearly 40 percent are members of religious minorities.

In addition, Iraqis can be considered for U.S. resettlement via the Direct Access Program created by Congress for Iraqis who work or have worked with the U.S. military or government, or a U.S.-based media organization or NGO, and who are at risk as a result of those affiliations. More than 36,000 Iraqi refugees have been admitted to the United States directly from Iraq under this program since 2007.

Besides defeating Da’esh, the United States has also made aiding Iraq’s refugees and IDPs a top priority. Humanitarian assistance provides lifesaving needs and the basis for reconciliation within Iraq, averting the risk of a humanitarian disaster that could sow the seeds for future conflict. ■



Syrian refugees at the Basirma refugee camp hear a presentation from American officials.



Senior Refugee Coordinator John Underriner, second from left, visits the home of an IDP family in the Harshm IDP camp.

PIECE BY PIECE

OBO quilters ply their craft with love

By Ed Warner, deputy editor

The holiday season is a time of gift-giving for many, and for a lucky few, the gift is a quilt, handmade with love by friends or family. But for a group of women in the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO), the quilt-giving—and making—season is year-round: They take turns making panels for a quilt that will be given to one of the group's members.

Once the recipient is chosen, then each member makes a panel for the quilt that's both reflective of its maker's artistic skill—such as painting, embroidery or applique and the recipient's tastes, explained group member June Parsons. Thus, the quilt given most recently, presented to Valencia Hall on Oct. 18, had much purple—her favorite color—and images of flowers, Parsons said.

Hall's quilt marked a milestone for the group, which formed informally in 2005 when several OBO women wanted to give a special present for a colleague who was about to have her first child. Nine more quilts have since been made for various group members, as well as a memorial quilt for a gravely ill colleague. The group was never formed to make quilts for members on demand; its members just wanted to do something nice for each other, Parsons explained. In fact, Parsons herself hasn't received a quilt; she says her reward has been the relationships built on creative camaraderie.

To make a quilt, the group first chooses the recipient, and Parsons—using her skill as a manager—asks each member who'll be making a panel when she can expect that panel to be completed. She then gives each of the panel-makers a piece of cloth on which blue lines are drawn (they wash away), to keep each motif in the panels the same size, for a professional result.

When she gets the panels back, Parsons stitches them together (with a machine) to form the quilt's decorative cover. She next hand embroiders on each panel-maker's first name. Thus, the panels are personalized, but with uniformity.

After-work quilting among a group of colleagues may not seem so unique, but one thing that's special about the OBO quilters is that they're mostly women working in what are traditionally male careers, and drawn from OBO's Design and Engineering operation. Parsons, for instance, is a structural engineer. Other members include a mechanical engineer, another structural engineer, architects, interior designers and operators of computer-aided design systems.

Parsons points out that engineering and architectural skills are great for quilt making because they let one envision a final structure—whether a new embassy building or a work of art that will hang from a wall or cover a bed. And, make no mistake:

These are works of personal art. As Parsons notes, “Nobody sets creative borders on each other,” for making the panels in these quilts. The panel-maker’s decorative medium can be embroidery, paint or even crayons. As a result, “every panel is different ... [because] people need to be creative in their own ways.”

The quilting group has grown as large as 20 members at times, and has even involved a couple of men.

Dividing up the work of quilt making among the members is essential because each quilt involves about 400 hours of work, Parsons noted.

When a quilt is finished, it’s presented to the recipient in a small ceremony. The ceremony where Hall received hers, for instance, occurred in a meeting room at the Harry S Truman building and also involved Hall’s supervisor, Heather Townsend. Parsons said it was especially important that Hall receive a quilt, as “she’s put a panel on every quilt” the group has ever made.

Sadly, one of the group’s quilts was dedicated to a member, Sandy Donovan, before she passed away; she’d been an inspiration to many in the group, Parsons said. More than 20 members were involved in that work, including the quilting group’s regulars, Melanie Berkemeyer, Valencia Hall, Johanna LaPierre, Teri Lloyd, Heather McIntire, Myrna Mills, Suzanne Rathlev, Marian Robinson, Susan Via Aaron and Piya Vlach.

Anyone at OBO—male or female—who wants to join the group can contact Parsons, or any of the quilting regulars, by email through the Department’s network. ■



Examining quilts made by the group are, from left, Karen Mummaw, Heather Townsend, Florida David and June Parsons.

Photo by Luis Jimenez

Preserving the Past

Department expands historic properties list

By Tobin Tracey, director, Office of Cultural Heritage, Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations

Secretary John Kerry in 2016 added seven properties to the Secretary of State's Register of Culturally Significant Property. The Secretary's Register, established in 2000 and administered through the Office of Cultural Heritage, began in 2001 with seven properties. Each secretary of state since has added at least five properties during his or her tenure.

The Office of Cultural Heritage manages the Department's properties that are designated as historically, culturally or architecturally significant and pertinent to a host country and/or U.S. diplomatic relations. The register is thus a list of important diplomatic properties that figure prominently in U.S. foreign affairs history.

The requirements to get on the register closely follow those for being listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. A property must be acknowledged by a host government, associated with significant historic events or persons in the host nation, an important piece of architecture and/or designed by a notable architect, involve a distinctive theme or assembly of properties, include a unique visual feature or characteristic, or be an important archaeological site. The property must also have played a central role in U.S. diplomatic history.

Initially, a board of OBO preservation specialists recommended properties for the register; now, a call for nominations goes out to posts every two years, and each post decides whether to nominate a property. Nominations are reviewed by the Office of Cultural Heritage, which makes recommendations to the Cultural Heritage Resources Committee, made up of OBO managing directors and office directors. The committee then recommends additions to the secretary, who makes the final decisions. Being added to the register is an honor and does not restrict the necessary alteration or disposal of the property nor give the property a preference within the appropriation process.



The Consular Academy at the chancery of Embassy Vienna.

Photo by Lee H. Warner



Chief of mission residence at U.S. Embassy Helsinki.

State Department photo



The chancery of Embassy Budapest.

State Department photo



Roosevelt House is Embassy New Delhi's ambassador's residence.

Photo by James M. Fairman



Palazzo Corpi in Istanbul, Turkey.

Photo by Copyright Sohohouse-Istanbul



Roosevelt House is the chief of mission residence in Curaçao.

Photo by Patricia R. Morales and Solmaz Sharifi



Villa Montfeld is the chief of mission residence in Algiers.

Photo by Thomas J. Quinzio

Instead, it ensures that the cultural value of a property is preserved through necessary maintenance and conservation.

Properties added to the registry this year include:

Villa Montfeld, the chief of mission residence in Algiers, was selected for its architecture and its role as headquarters for then-Deputy Secretary Warren Christopher during negotiations for the release of the American hostages during the Tehran hostage crisis. Deputy Secretary Christopher brokered the Algiers Accords of Jan. 19, 1981, and the hostages arrived in Algeria the next day. Villa Montfeld was built between 1853 and 1863 in the Moorish style, and it is one of the most elegant estates in Algiers.

The U.S. Embassy Chancery in Budapest, Hungary, was chosen for its architecture and because it is where Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty, leader of the Catholic Church in Hungary, sought asylum for 15 years during the Soviet occupation of that country. During World War II, the chancery building operated under the Swiss flag. Swiss Consul Carl Lutz helped save 62,000 Hungarian Jews from deportation by the Nazis and aided Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg in his rescue efforts. The building was designed in 1899 in the Art Nouveau style.

Roosevelt House, the chief of mission residence in Curaçao, was selected due to its local designation and its inclusion within a UNESCO World Heritage Site (the historic city center of Punda in Willemstad, Curaçao) and because it's a memorial of friendship between the people of the Netherlands Antilles and the United States. During World War II, U.S. forces defended the islands from German U-boat attacks on the oil refineries and tankers. After the war, the people of Curaçao symbolized their gratitude by making available the location of this residence on a prime location in Willemstad overlooking the harbor entrance. The house was completed in 1950 and the memorial is still celebrated today by the people of Curaçao.

The ambassador's residence in Helsinki, Finland, was selected for its architecture and its role as a site for negotiations on the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), the Helsinki Accords and the first Gulf Crisis. The house was designed in 1938 in the neo-Georgian style and was inspired by William Byrd's Westover Plantation in Virginia.

Palazzo Corpi, the former U.S. embassy and consulate building in Istanbul, was chosen for its architecture and its role as the site where Ambassador Henry Morgenthau wrote his diaries and collected other materials for the memoir of his tenure as ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, an important primary source for scholarship on the dislocations and massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The building was designed in the Italianate Style and constructed between 1873 and 1882.

Roosevelt House, the ambassador's residence in New Delhi, was chosen for its architecture and because it symbolizes the U.S. commitment to India after its independence. The chancery was added to the register in 2004, and the residence has been added as an extension of the original nomination. The original New Delhi embassy compound was designed in the 1950s by Edward Durell Stone in the International style.

The Consular Academy at the U.S. Embassy in Vienna was chosen for its architecture and as one of the sites for the SALT talks, from 1970 to 1972. It was used again for the SALT II Summit in 1979, when President Jimmy Carter and Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev met before signing the SALT II treaty. The building was designed in the neo-Baroque style and originally housed the Austrian Foreign Service Institute when it opened in 1904.

The register is an important part of United States diplomacy abroad, since responsible stewardship of cultural properties opens the door for dialogue between nations and people of different backgrounds. By adding properties to the register and committing to their maintenance, the United States shows a respect to a foreign nation's heritage that is appreciated around the world. ■

Reopening Recalled

Ambassador helped revive Embassy Kabul By Ambassador Jeanine Jackson, retired



Afghan Foreign Service Nationals gather with their flag-waving boys at the embassy's flag ceremony.
State Department Photo

Fifteen years ago this month, I and two other FSOs arrived in Afghanistan to reopen the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, after its 13-year hiatus. The reopening team, which also included Anne Wright and John Kincannon, was met at Bagram airport by a four-man Mobile Security Division (MSD) team and driven through a war-torn landscape to the embassy, where we met Ambassador James Dobbins, Special Representative to the Afghan Opposition; NEA/EX Director Kathleen Austin-

Ferguson, security specialists and the dozens of FSNs who had maintained and protected the embassy while it lay dormant during rule of the Soviets and the Taliban.

After settling into the four-room bunker that had sheltered the FSNs from attacks, the group explored the embassy's 28-acre grounds and chancery, which was largely unchanged since being sealed in January 1989 when all American staff were evacuated.

The entire facility, in fact, was frozen in time, as if the staff had just picked up and left. A half-smoked cigar lay in an ashtray, there was a chocolate pudding in the Ambassador's fridge and Wang computers in the offices. The ambassador's china and silver was perfectly stored, and 14 old Volkswagen Passats sat in the basement – until the FSNs got them running. In the cafeteria, appliances were covered in cobwebs, and receipts lay about, chronicling the names of officers and what they had ordered for lunch. There were even bird nests in the draperies, and photos of all the previous ambassadors hung haphazardly on a wall.

In all, the chancery's only damage was broken pictures, some books and papers strewn about the library and rocket damage in the medical unit. The communications vault had protected what was thought to be valuable in 1989: stereo equipment, IBM Selectric typewriters, the ambassadorial silver and unclassified communications equipment. While the outbuildings and dozens of vehicles had been destroyed,

the gardeners had kept hundreds of rose bushes blooming.

Austin-Ferguson jumped into action, organizing a flag-raising ceremony that involved members of the U.S. military, Afghan FSNs and their flag-waving family members and American staff. At the ceremony were incoming Defense Afghan Minister Mohammad Fahim and Interior Minister Younous Qanooni, as were dozens of international journalists.

The reopening “demonstrates that we are determined to play a continuing diplomatic, political and economic role here in assisting Afghanistan to make the transition from war to peace,” Ambassador Dobbins declared. “We are here, and we are here to stay.”

The flag, which last flew over the embassy in 1989, waved in the sun. The Marine who lowered that flag 13 years earlier was on hand. The approximately 60 Afghan FSNs who’d remained at post were recognized for their bravery during the 13 brutal years of the Soviets and Taliban. Ambassador Dobbins and Kathleen then returned to Washington and the small staff went to work, immediately hosting several CODELs including one from then Senator Joe Biden. (He stayed in the former ambassador’s office.) Another large CODEL, led by Sen. John McCain, also came and met with Afghan government officials in a large tent at Bagram. (The U.S. transported to Bagram Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah and other Afghans, using an old Soviet helicopter.)

In terms of diplomacy with host nation, Wright, Kincannon and I engaged with newly elected Afghan President Karzai and members of his interim government. Our offices used the furniture and supplies that were on hand and our computers were eventually installed. Nonetheless, we had to share one toilet at the bunker (the only functioning toilet at the embassy). We hired additional Afghan staff, planned for construction of containerized

housing units, interviewed contacts and sent cables—using a Consular FSN’s Hotmail account. (The account was soon oversubscribed due to personal emails being sent to the dozens of maintenance and security staff who had arrived).

Next, Lima Company of the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade arrived to provide security (with the RSO) and other offices opened, including the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, Defense Attaché Office and facilities management. On January 17, Ambassador Ryan Crocker arrived as charge’d’affaires and the office officially became the U.S. Embassy.

But the real feel of a U.S. Embassy may’ve only arrived when, in late December, a self-appointed community liaison officer went to work; he started a weekly rug bazaar on the embassy grounds and weekly happy hours. The latter featured military rations and naan, plus some beer and Galliano found in the old USIS auditorium and bar. ■



The author, front row center, poses with Foreign Service National staff members who protected the embassy during its closure.

State Department Photo



Training Typhoon

In evacuation scenario, DOD lends hand

By Seiji T. Shiratori, foreign policy advisor to commander, Task Force 51 Naval Amphibious Force/5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (CTF 51/5th MEB)

In a training scenario undertaken Sept. 18 at the U.S. Embassy in Muscat, a typhoon-ravaged Bahrain, causing the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) to recommend a Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) of U.S. citizens and other potential evacuees. Regional Security Officer (RSO) Dave Heddleston and assistants Michael Alimenti and Valerie Lee drafted the EAC cable on the threat and the embassy's plan. Ambassador Marc Sievers and the deputy chief of mission (DCM) and key staff would remain to coordinate the evacuation and disaster relief assistance, while the post otherwise went onto ordered departure status.

It was to become the first, full-scale, real-time exercise of an NEO at a U.S. diplomatic mission overseas and to even involve the actual departure from the host nation of Americans, via a helicopter and a hovercraft, to a U.S. Navy vessel offshore.

A hovercraft carrying Embassy Muscat "evacuees" departs the beach near the embassy on its way to a rendezvous with the USS San Antonio.

Photo by Sgt. Lauren Falk

Responding to the NEO, the Department of Defense the next morning sent 45 Marines from the Fleet Anti-Terrorism Support Team (FAST) to the embassy. “DOD integration into embassy operations augmented the operability of a wholly interagency effort and magnified post’s ability to support evacuees,” said Heddleston when the training scenario had ended.

In the scenario, the typhoon had severely damaged the nation’s airport, ports, and electrical and water infrastructure. The roads leading out of Oman were washed out or flooded for several kilometers.

Against that backdrop, several of the post’s operating units took action:

- The Country Team prepared for food shortages and soaring prices.
- The management section rallied its assets and contacts to ensure the mission could continue operations under the drawdown.
- The consular chief sent an emergency message to U.S. citizens, giving evacuees instructions on where and when to meet and what to anticipate.
- The public affairs section engaged with local media and Omani ministries to ensure messaging reached potential evacuees.
- The RSO relayed messages to Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) constituents, and
- The Political/Economic section engaged with the Oman American Business Center, to pass information.

The post also used its radio networks and bulk short-message-system (SMS) to rapidly send time-sensitive information to Chief of Mission personnel and potential evacuees. The InterContinental Hotel, an OSAC constituent, was set up as an assembly point for evacuees, enabling the embassy to process a stream of personnel without overloading Omani and embassy security personnel.

With time, U.S. citizens, locally employed staff and citizens of partner nations began arriving at the embassy, now reinforced by Royal Oman Police (ROP). Evacuees were quickly processed through the Embarkation Control Center (ECC) and a consular officer verified their citizenship. ROP border control officials working with the ECC conducted border exit controls for evacuees. (Evacuees going out by helicopter were identified with arm bands, while others awaited a hovercraft’s departure.)



Brigadier General Francis Donovan, commander of Amphibious Task Force 51/5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, briefs Ambassador to Oman Marc J. Sievers as foreign policy advisor Seiji T. Shiratori looks on.

Photo by Sgt. Lauren Falk

Meanwhile, the bilateral, interagency tactical operations center—manned by Marines, RSO staff and Omani liaison officers—notified ROP Coast Guard vessels of the hovercraft’s impending departure. Minutes later, as the first load of evacuees stepped off the helicopter, on the deck of the U.S.S. Whidbey Island, the hovercraft fired up its turbines—kicking up just enough sand that observers atop the embassy turned away – and hovered away at 40 knots under escort by the ROP Coast Guard.

In all, the embassy and its DOD partners had safely conducted an evacuation that, while only a training exercise, made the post ready should trouble rear its head in real life. The training also affirmed that the bilateral relationship with this strategically important country could continue in a crisis without disruption.

“This exercise highlighted not only the strength and agility of our military capabilities, it also demonstrated clearly the importance of interagency cooperation in carrying out joint missions in sovereign states abroad,” said Political/Economic Chief Jamal Al-Mussawi. In the training, staff from Embassy Muscat, and a visiting contingent of RSOs and consular officers from neighboring posts, learned to prepare for an actual NEO and how to conduct trainings like this sort at their posts.

Furthermore, senior officers from Omani security, military, law enforcement and disaster-response agencies learned what the United States will do in an a real emergency and how the two nations might coordinate in such an event, lessons that would equally apply when other diplomatic missions in Muscat evacuate their own citizens.

In the wake of the training, the embassy was especially grateful to its naval attaché, Marine Lieutenant Colonel Aaron Weiss, for conceptualizing and facilitating the exercise, and to the commander of Task Force 51 Naval Amphibious Force/5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (CTF 51/5th MEB). With help from DOD, the Department accomplished a highly successful training simulation and proved that careful coordination and preparation will mitigate any disaster. ■



Ambassador to Oman Marc J. Sievers, center, and Consular Chief Sean Hanifen, left, oversee consular officers and Marines receiving evacuees.

Photo by Sgt. Lauren Falk

FSI's Self-Defense Course is Basic, Hands-On, Applicable Everywhere

By Caroline Hedberg, program assistant, and Damon Brown, instructor, FSI Transition Center

In a world where acts of violence seem all too common and risks to personal security loom larger than ever, FSI's Transition Center provides the tools to help keep community members safe. Its interactive, "hands-on" Basic Personal Defense (BPD) course teaches Department employees and family members how to recognize and respond to the threat of physical assault.

BPD is led by Security Overseas Seminar Coordinator Damon Brown and contractors who specialize in personal defense. The team is keenly aware of the security risks that employees and their families face overseas every day. The course shows participants how to respond to physical assault threats through situational awareness and personal defense skills. The Transition Center collaborated with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security training unit to offer the Department's first course in Basic Personal Defense in October 2014. Since then, more than 400 Foreign Service and Civil Service employees and their family members have attended the course. Participants spend two-and-a-half hours learning how to develop a personal security mindset and, if needed, how to use their elbows, knees, fists and feet to fend off attackers. Each participant is given ample opportunity, instruction, practice and feedback in a variety of self-defense techniques.

For example, in one session Aug. 29, in a classroom furnished with blue athletic mats and sparring dummies instead of the traditional training tables and chairs, students began with an easy warm-up. Instructors then introduced basic body blocks and escapes to practice with partners, answering questions and giving step-by-step guidance. Later, participants lined up in front of the dummies to practice striking others with the palm of their hand. A trainer reminded the class that the goal was to overwhelm the attacker with fast blows in order to create an opportunity to escape. This simple movement, combined with

shouts of "get away!" and "stop!" was something that everyone could do regardless of athletic ability, age or physical strength. The instructors encouraged participants to use all available means to fend off an aggressor, and demonstrated variations of the moves for those with limited mobility.

The confidence in the room grew quickly. "People come in wondering, 'Is this really something I can do?'" explained trainer Matthew Watson, "but midway through the class, everybody is participating and excited."

While practicing kicks, blocks and escapes is empowering, the instructors emphasize that the most effective way to protect oneself and minimize risk is to cultivate a personal security mindset. For many participants, attending this course is their first step toward developing that awareness. They learn the importance of paying attention to one's surroundings. That means putting away electronic devices, looking around and observing one's immediate environment while in public. In addition, the instructors describe how aggressors tend to choose their targets: Someone wearing headphones and walking without awareness or purpose is much more attractive to an opportunistic attacker than someone walking confidently and actively paying attention to his or her environment.

Developing a personal security mindset is just as important in Washington, D.C., as it is overseas. One participant explained that she registered for the course in response to reports of attacks on a Washington-area bike path she takes to work every day. "I can't control when I go to work, and I'm often on that path

when it's dark," she said. Practicing self-defense tactics helps her feel more confident navigating her commute alone. "You don't get to choose the time or place for something bad to happen," said Watson. "It's the Boy Scout mentality—always be prepared."

A few participants have learned this the hard way: In 2015, a team of instructors traveled to California to teach Basic Personal Defense to a Bureau of Consular Affairs office whose director insisted upon the training for her staff after she used skills learned in the course to successfully escape an aggressor.

As long as the need for basic personal defense can help keep our community safe in today's security environment, the Transition Center will work to expand and evolve the program. Currently, it is developing a Basic Personal Defense for Teenagers course to be launched in 2017. For more information about MQ930 - Basic Personal Defense, visit the course [website](#) or email FSISOS@state.gov. ■



Course participants practice techniques under the supportive eye of self-defense instructors.
Photo by Damon Brown



LYING IN STATE: AMBASSADOR BLUESTONE TWEETS!

Spalding Bluestone
@Ambassador Bluestone
Testing – how do I know this is working? Is this a twit I'm sending?
[@OMSDarla](#), can you come in here?
8:30 a.m.

Spalding Bluestone
@Ambassador Bluestone
State Department joggers' entrance used by numerous people clearly
not jogging. If people shimmy coming in, is it the shimmiers' entrance?
11:40 a.m.

Spalding Bluestone
@Ambassador Bluestone
Right – okay. This is my new way to share my keen insights and
impeccable observations on our bilateral relations so to start I'll just say
8:45 a.m.

Spalding Bluestone
@Ambassador Bluestone
Monkeys at a keyboard would eventually produce a briefing paper for my meeting with the Foreign Minister, but the points would skew to a monkeycentric point of view.
1:32 p.m.

Spalding Bluestone
@Ambassador Bluestone
Only 140 characters? Zounds so skimpy no space for big thoughts –
@OMSDarla, can someone in commo fix this? No problems like this on Facebook
#AmbBluestoneBodaciousness
8:49 a.m.

Spalding Bluestone
@Ambassador Bluestone
If I enter a room and nobody's there to stand, have I even entered? If
I preposition staffers, this will never happen. Problem solved.
2:16 p.m.

Spalding Bluestone
@Ambassador Bluestone
Successful diplomacy is putting yourself in the other guy's shoes, unless
the other guy's a swamp monster – he's maybe not wearing shoes.
10:03 a.m.

Spalding Bluestone
@Ambassador Bluestone
As Chief of Mission, flying the flags on the car is good but
shouldn't there also be a special Chief of Mission hat? Slacks?
4:42 p.m.

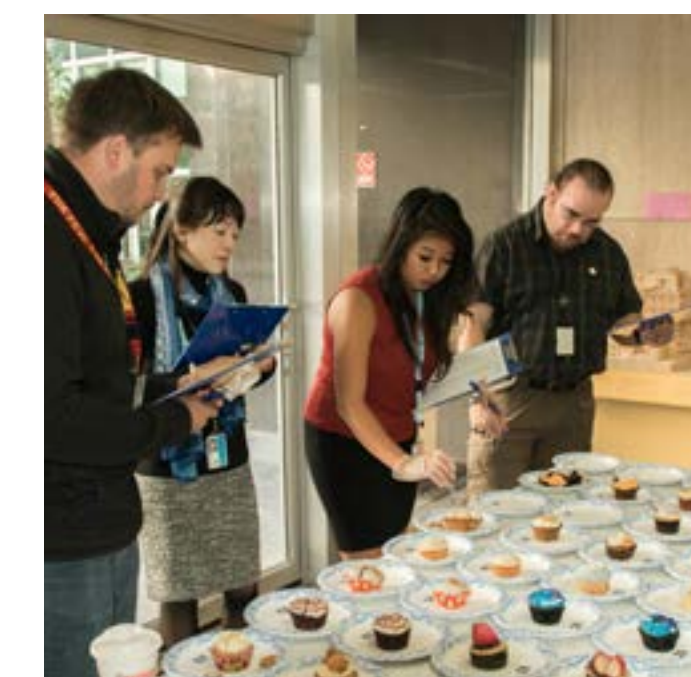
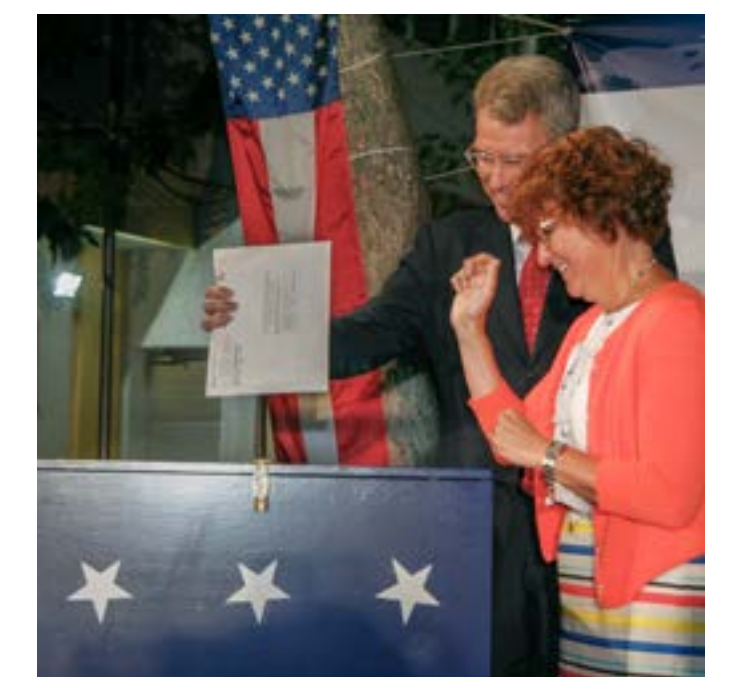
Spalding Bluestone
@Ambassador Bluestone
Substantive engagement with Foreign Minister, featuring his secret recipe
chicken wings and probably one too many Rob Roys mfs!tpfffffffffff
11:19 p.m.

Spalding Bluestone
@Ambassador Bluestone
According to the saying, an Ambassador is an honest man sent abroad
to lie for his country. Does his staff draft "lying points" for him?
11:11 a.m.

Spalding Bluestone
@Ambassador Bluestone
How can I sleep? Where are my sleeping points?
11:43 p.m.

AGGREG 2016

Jakarta Center Reaches Milestone



TAP Image
to Read Story

In September, Jessica Aggie, right, a member of the group Komunitas Melek Bahasa (in English, Literate Community), became the one millionth visitor to @america, the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta's American culture center, which is almost 6 years old. Aggie attended a Massive Open Online Course there on self-actualization and leadership skills. She received her certificate from, at left, Jed Dornburg, @america director and deputy cultural affairs attaché, and Peka Parningotan, founder of Komunitas Melek Bahasa. ■

Photo by Dina Ariani



Voting Day Held in Athens



Ambassador to Greece Geoffrey Pyatt and his wife Mary cast their California ballots during the U.S. Embassy in Athens' first Voting Day Party, held Oct. 14 at the American Community School. During the event organized by the consular section, U.S. citizen-guests dropped more than 500 absentee ballots into a giant star-spangled box for forwarding to U.S. election officials. Twenty consular staff and volunteers answered voters' questions at the party, which featured a band and an array of red, white and blue refreshments. ■

State Department photo



TAP Image
to Read Story



Beach Cleanup in Côte d'Ivoire



These smiling volunteers were part of the 1,100-strong contingent brought together by the U.S. Embassy in Abidjan in September to clean up the beach in Grand Bassam, a tourist destination east of Côte d'Ivoire's capital. The effort was part of International Coastal Cleanup Day, which increases participation in ocean stewardship and helped revitalize the community, which suffered a terrorist attack earlier this year. ■

Photo by Urbain Amani

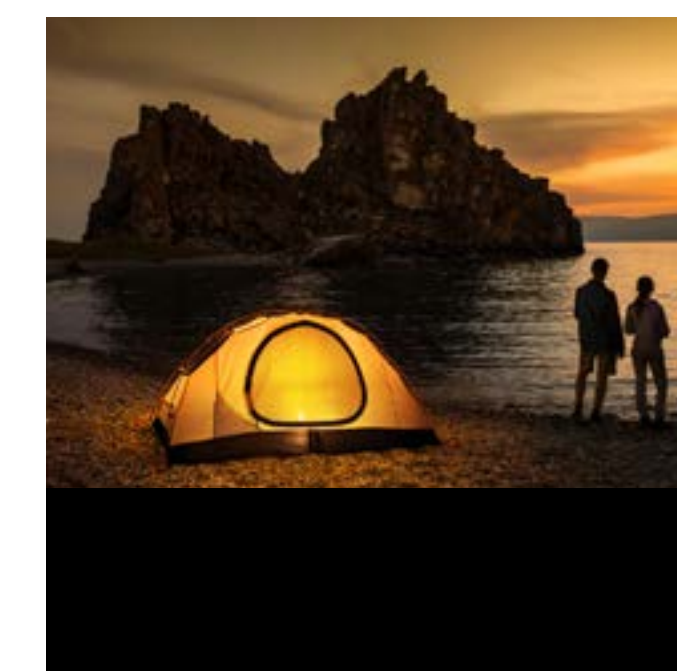
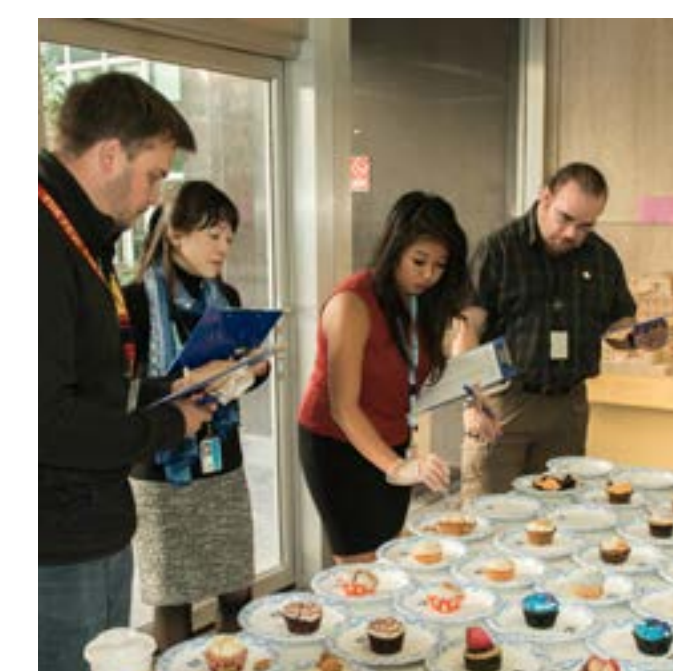
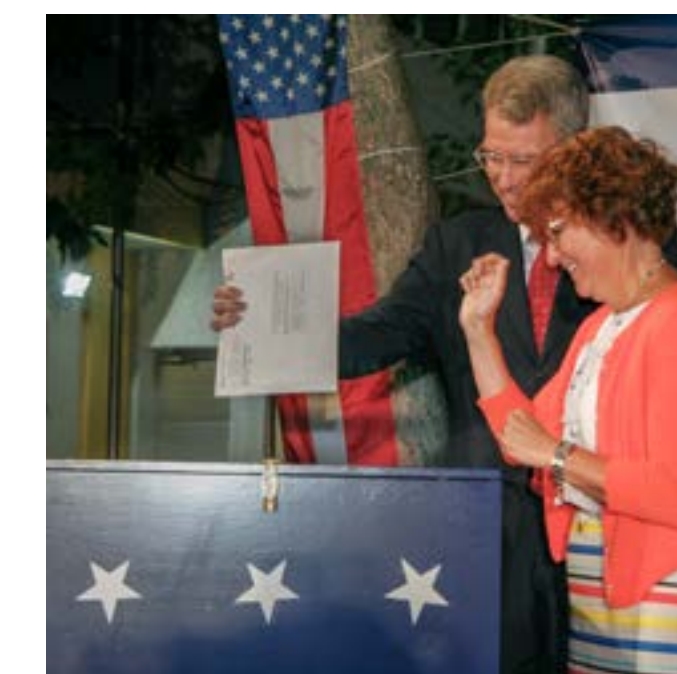


Embassy Honors Prosecutors' Work



From left, Acting Foreign Minister of Panama Maria Luisa Navarro and Panamanian Attorney General Kenia Porcell joined U.S. Ambassador to Panama John D. Feeley, at right, in September to recognize two prosecutors' work combating trafficking in persons (TIP) crimes. Plaques were awarded to prosecutors Rafael Baloyes and Ricardo Muñoz, and to Gregorio Rodríguez of the Special Prosecutor's Office on Organized Crime, during an embassy-organized ceremony at the Ministry of Foreign Relations, part of Panama's TIP Awareness Month. ■

State Department Photo



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to Read Story

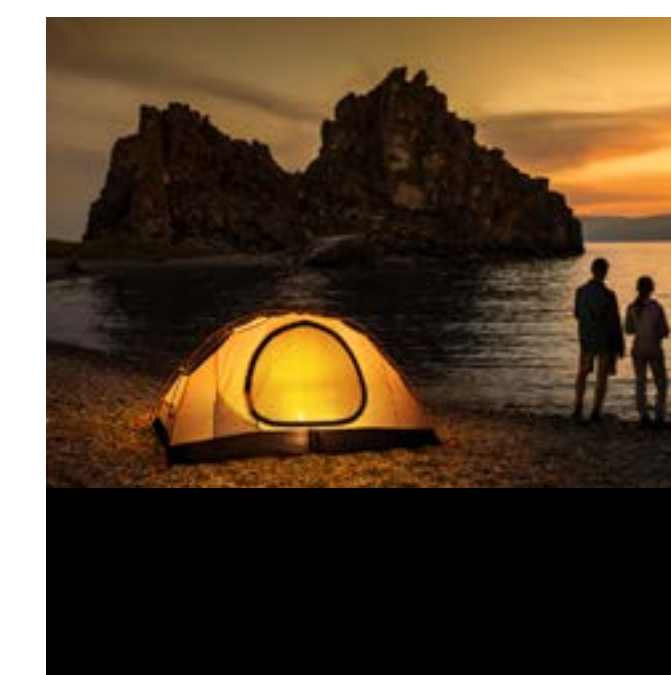
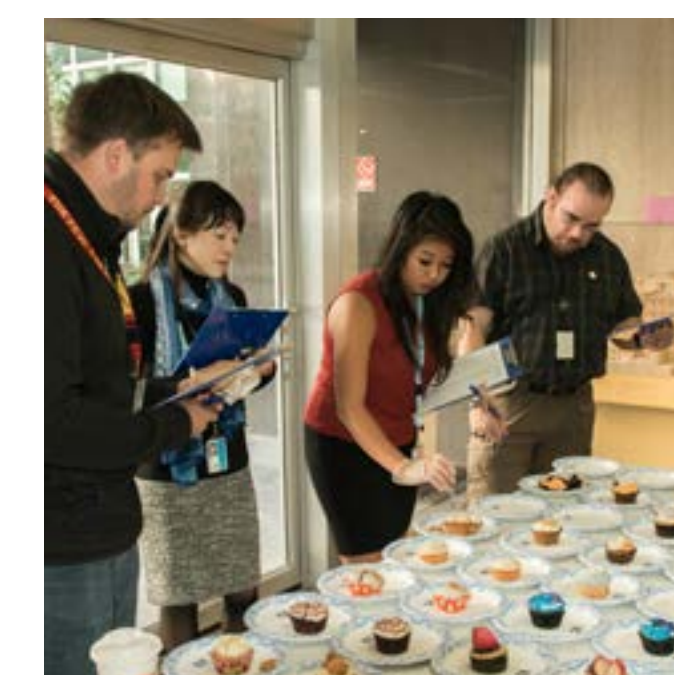
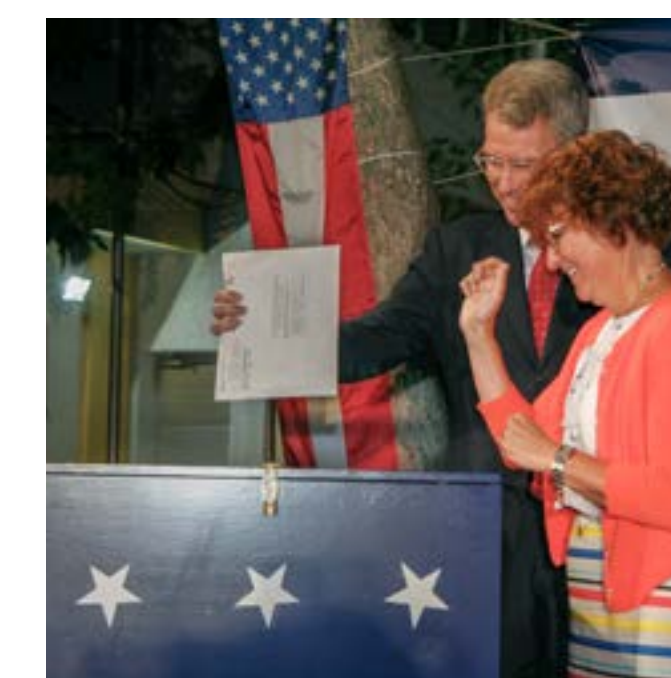


CFC on Track to Goal



Tasting judges, from left, Isaac D. Pacheco, Ashuri Matsuhashi, Carrie Duong and Art Parnell examine the fare at this year's CFC Cupcake Bakeoff competition at HST in November, one of several fall fundraisers held for the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). By early November, the Department had raised \$569,453 and was on track to meet its \$1.7 million fundraising goal, said the Department's campaign coordinator, Michael Karlsberg. Among the top-giving bureaus were the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Bureau of Information Resource Management. ■

Photo by Luis A. Jimenez Jr.



Ethics Answers

Q: I am a Foreign Service officer posted in the United States, and I have been invited to speak at my alma mater about my career in the Foreign Service. Specifically, the university has asked me to address a group of alumni who are attending a gala honoring the college's centennial and to be a guest speaker in two classes (one on public policy and the other on foreign relations). I am considering discussing negotiations of a peace treaty on which I recently worked. Because the university is out of state, it has offered to pay for my travel, lodging and meals, and to provide a \$500 honorarium. May I accept this invitation? What sorts of issues do I need to consider?

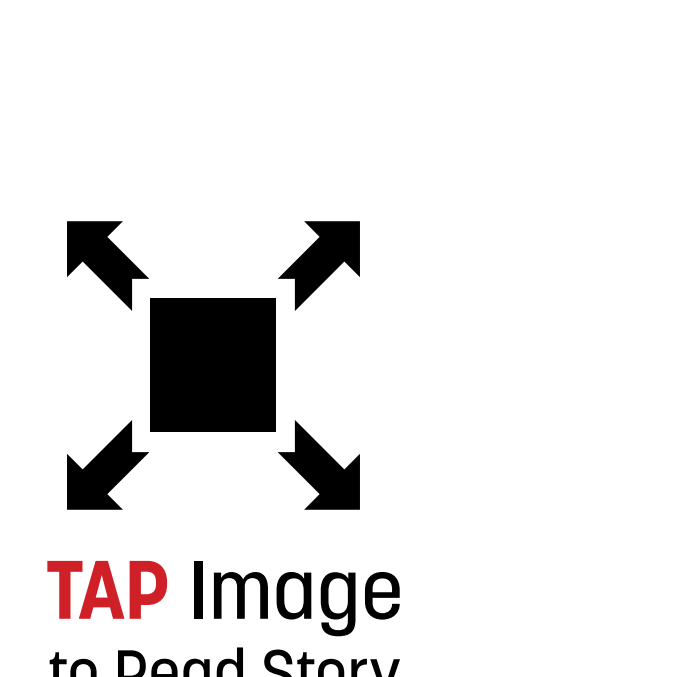
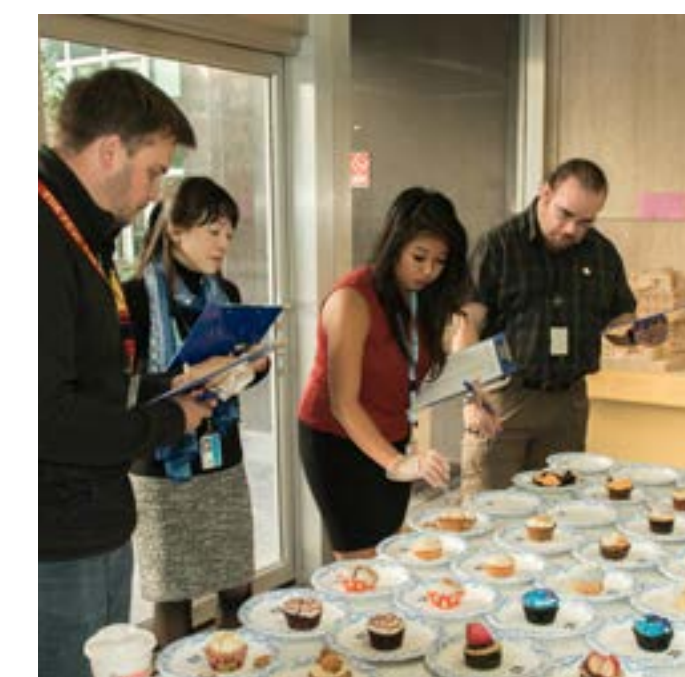
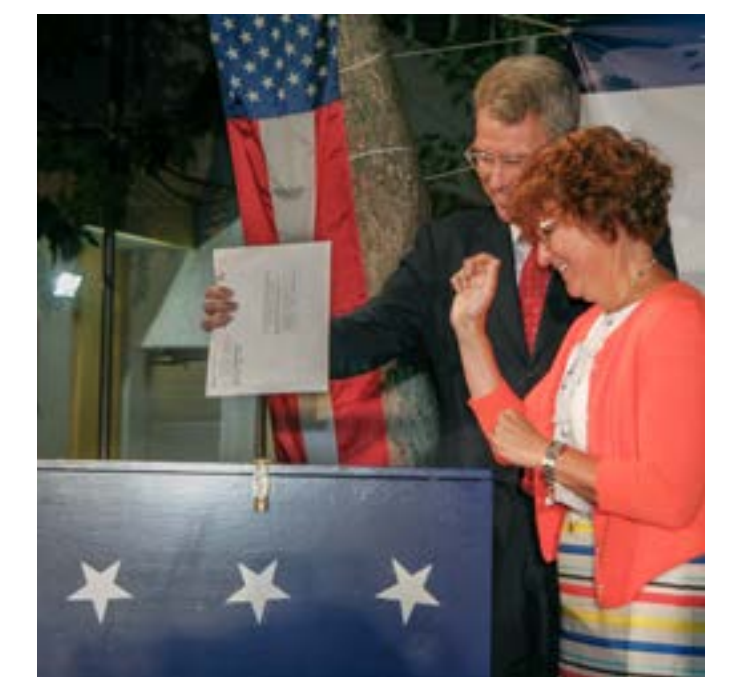
A: It sounds like you will be speaking in a personal capacity on a topic that relates to your official duties. Assuming you are a career employee, you may accept compensation for travel, meals and lodging related to this personal-capacity activity—but you cannot otherwise be paid for the remarks themselves, including an honorarium. (If you are a non-career employee, such as a political appointee whose salary is above the GS scale, consult with the Ethics Attorney Mailbox, as you may not be able to accept even travel, lodging or meals in connection with a personal-capacity speech related to your official duties.) You must also take care in how the university references your title and current position. Since you are speaking in a personal capacity, your title and current position should only be referenced as a detail in a larger biographical summary and should not be referenced at all in connection with a speech at a fundraising event or in fundraising materials. You should take care to rely on publicly available information in formulating your remarks and to take annual leave to cover your time away from the office. Furthermore, because your remarks are likely to touch on issues of “Departmental concern” (see 3 FAM 4170), you should submit them for review to the PAReviews@state.gov mailbox well in advance of the event.

Finally, please note that if in the future you plan to attend events where you are asked to speak generally about your career trajectory at the Department and do not intend to get into the specifics of your work, please contact EthicsAttorneyMailbox@state.gov for applicable guidance. More information is available at <http://l.s.state.sbu/sites/efd/Pages/OutsideActivities.aspx>

More information can be found at:

<http://l.s.state.sbu/sites/efd/Pages/PostEmploymentRestrictions.aspx>.

Ethics Answers presents hypothetical ethical scenarios Department employees might face. For help with real ethics questions, email EthicsAttorneyMailbox@state.gov.



TAP Image
to Read Story



Retirements

Civil Service

Baker, Carolyn Patricia
Beckman, Kathleen H.
Brookman, Joseph O.
Chu, Michael Paul
Coates, Karen M.
Curley, Susan A.
Easley, Caroline

Eley, Darlyce M.
Franklin, William P.
Hawkins, Marcia Ar
Hetland, Arline R.
Hopwood, David W.
Karzai, Haider M.
Mason, Maurice Clarissa
Miller, Carla J.

Miller, Eleni
Moss, Richard A.
Pinnix, Anthony C.
Pittman, Susan R.
Roby, Judy A.
Sarring, Kevin L.
Sebert, Jamiss E.
Settles, DeForrest A.

Thessin, James H.
Woodard, Jewel D.
Zayas, Orlando
Zheng, Limin
Zimonjic, Nevenka L.

Foreign Service

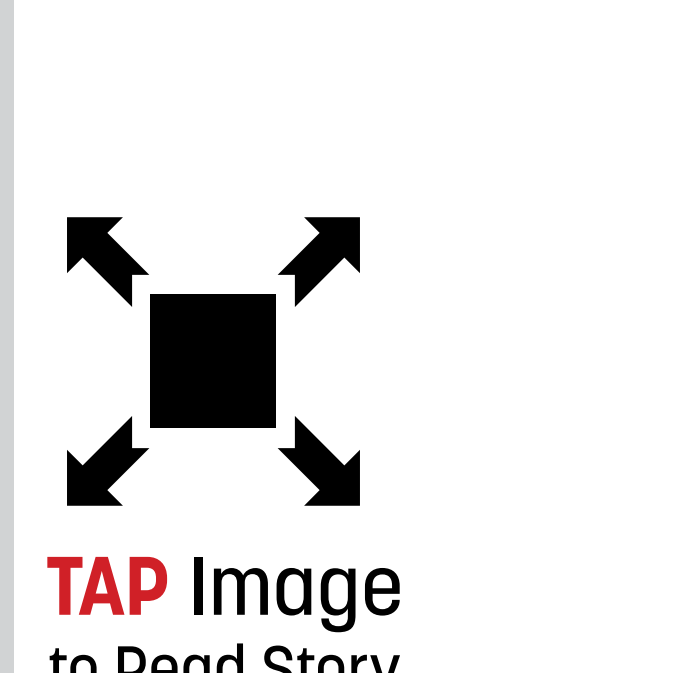
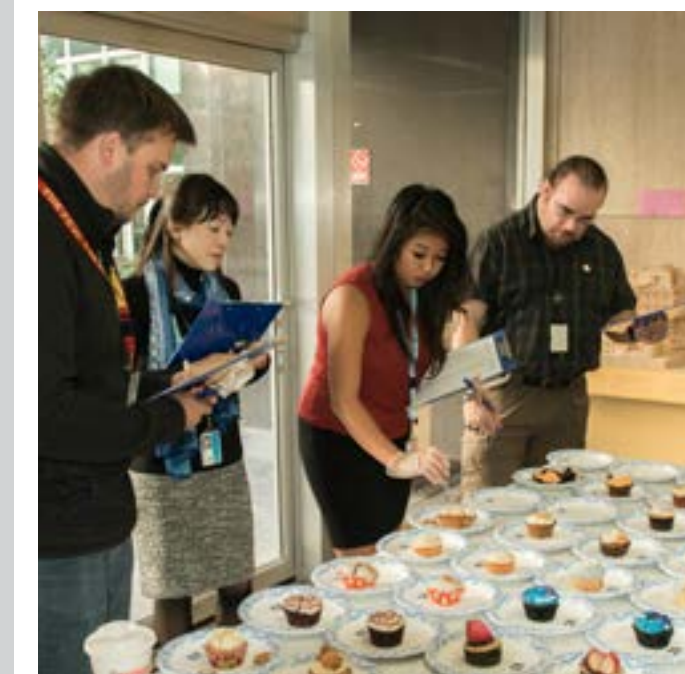
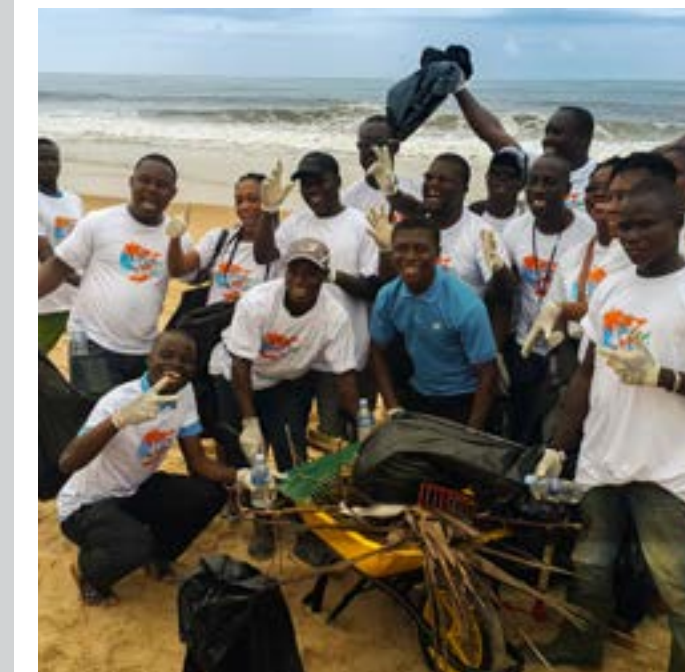
Aceto, Paul Vincent
Aderinto, Adedayo
Ahmed, Aziz
Albrecht, Karl Philip
Alford, Edward M.
Anderson, Craig Allen
Berry, Morrell J.
Blankenship, Robert S.
Braun, Joanne L.
Bravo, Paula M.
Brunette, Stephen P.
Byrd, Lewis K.
Bysfield, Mark Donald
Cantrell, Paul Michael
Carle, Lisa M.
Carlson, Robert W.
Charette, Christian D.
Clements, Gary A.
Clune, Daniel Anthony
Coffineau, Victoria A.
Covington, Karl W.
Cowhig Jr., David F.
Creevy, Carolyn I.

Cristina, Stephen Alan
Curry, Dennis L.
Davis, John M.
Davison, Kees C.
Dekleva, Kenneth B.
Dibble, Elizabeth Link
Eason, Richard Mansfield
Egger, Philip Hughes
Forder, Kenneth A.
Fox, Bie Yie Ju
Frank, Paul S.
Fulena, Christine O.
Gage, Philip C.
Galindo, David R.
Ghebreab, Dehab
Goodman, Errick A.
Groccia, David S.
Grover, Randall S.
Hall Jr., Blair P.
Harrison Jr., James A.
Haskins, Jack S.
Haynes, William N.
Hill, Patricia A.
Honnold, Michael J.

Hoover, Jeffrey Jude
Hromatka, Joseph J.
Hubber, Peter W.
Hushour, Darren R.
Jess, Charles J.
Jones, Eric A.
Ketchum, Sharon S.
Kirby, Michael David
Kramer, Douglas R.
Kushner, Todd Andrew
Largent, Dale A.
Latimer, Alan Bryan C.
Leon, Edgar J.
Linehan, Patrick J.
Luftman, Eric Wade
Mandel, Lawrence C.
Mariz, John C.
May, Lauren I.
McAnulty, James P.
McBride, Thomas K.
McCarthy, Deborah Ann
McKeever, Matthew
Mendelsohn, Henry Neil
Moyes, Julie Rethmeier

Muench, Sandra M.
Murray, Christopher W.
Nowlan, Daniel A.
Olson, Michael J.
Paskman, Sheila
Payne, Beth A.
Piascik, Lisa A.
Piehel, Robert W.
Popp, Jeffrey L.
Pryer, Christopher E.
Ram, Vangala S.
Roberts, John C.
Rosen, Dorothea Maria
Ross, Michael H.
Ruterbories, Julie Ann
Schaefer, Marrie Y.
Schnorbus, David
Shea, Cecile
Silberberg, Jules D.
Sohier III, William Davies
Stafford, Edward George
Steinfeld, Andrew W.
Steinger, Shayna Rebecca
Stettenbauer, Grace Caroly

Strickland, Thomas V.
Teitelbaum, Donald G.
Therrien, Roy
Townswick, Mary
Tripp Jr., Raymond F.
Van De Vate, Katherine
Vazquez, Xavier
Walter, William C.
Weber, Thomas A.
West, Dianne K.
Wharton, D. Bruce
Wilkins, Michael E.
Wycoff, Karl E.
Yates, Raymond Lee
Zix, James L.



TAP Image
to Read Story



In Memoriam

Baldwin

Burgoon

Buzbee

Cramer

Good

Levesque

Moxhay

Olson

Pearl

Rockweiler

Seymour

Witt

Questions concerning employee deaths should be directed to the Office of Casualty Assistance at (202) 736-4302. Inquiries concerning deaths of retired employees should be directed to the Office of Retirement at (202) 261-8960. For specific questions on submitting an obituary, please contact Michael Hahn at hahnmg@state.gov or (202) 663-1688.



In Memoriam

Bruce Baldwin



Bruce Baldwin, 66, the husband of Office Management Specialist (USNATO) Virginia Baldwin, died March 22 in Brussels, one of four American victims of terrorist attacks that day at the city's airport. He had worked for the Department as a classified pouch supervisor, an Engineering Services Office logistician and an APO supervisor. His enthusiasm for exploration and curiosity were boundless, making every outing an adventure. An exceptionally generous person, he took a strong interest in helping other Eligible Family Members navigate the Department's bureaucracy. He is missed by many.



In Memoriam

David W. Burgoon Jr.



David W. Burgoon Jr., 88, a retired FSO, died July 22 in San Jose, Calif. He served in the Navy during the Korean War before joining the Department. His posts included Mexico, Canada, Afghanistan, Ecuador, Bolivia and Nicaragua. In 1979, he launched a second career as an immigration law advisor in Los Angeles. Upon retirement, David became a devoted volunteer for a range of community-based centers serving immigrant communities in Wisconsin, Ohio and California. In 2005, he made his home in the San Francisco Bay area.



In Memoriam

John Buzbee



John Buzbee, 50, an active-duty FSO, who served throughout the Middle East, including two tours in Iraq after the 2003 U.S. invasion, died Sept. 15 at his home in Washington, D.C. The cause was complications from metastatic colon cancer. He began his career as a newspaper reporter at the Kansas City Star. After earning a degree in Arab studies at Georgetown University in 1997, he joined the Department. His other posts included Riyadh, Cairo and Jerusalem. He also worked as a researcher at FSI and on Balkan issues in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.



In Memoriam

Dwight M. Cramer



Dwight M. Cramer, 89, a retired FSO, died Sept. 15 in Rockville, Md. He was drafted in the Army at the end of World War II and then joined the Department in 1952. His assignments included the U.N., where he helped establish the International Atomic Energy Agency, Munich, Bangkok and Taipei. In Washington, D.C., he worked on scientific and technical cooperation with the Soviet Union, Poland, Yugoslavia and China. In retirement, he kept active with Common Cause, DACOR, the Asian American Forum and the River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation, where he sang in the choir and was chairman of the board. Music was very important in his life, especially opera.



In Memoriam

Paul Lawrence Good



Paul Lawrence Good, 77, a retired FSO, died Oct. 12 in Reston, Va. He joined USIA in 1963 and served at posts in Thailand, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Nigeria, Suriname, Australia, Yugoslavia, South Africa, Morocco and Senegal. Son of missionaries to China and a humanitarian at heart, he was an early advocate of the DREAM Act to improve immigrants' lives. When he retired in 2000, he opened a law practice as an immigration lawyer in Herndon, Va. An avid reader and champion-level squash player, he took up cycling in recent years. His son, Mark, also an FSO, currently serves in Geneva, Switzerland.



In Memoriam

Gerard J. Levesque



Gerard J. Levesque, 94, a retired FSO, died Oct. 6 in Greensburg, Pa. after a brief illness. He joined the Department in 1950, after serving in the Army Air Corps during World War II and graduation from Boston University. His posts included Dakar, Marseille, Saigon, Vientiane, Conakry, Vienna, Austria, Port-au-Prince and Peking, where he was an aide to former President George H.W. Bush. He retired in 1977 and moved to Sun City West, Ariz.



In Memoriam

Diana Jill Moxhay



Diana Jill Moxhay, 74, a retired FSO, died May 21 at home in Peaks Island, Maine, following a brave battle with cancer. Upon graduation in 1964, she worked for Radio Liberty Munich and Voice of America before joining USIA. Her mastery of Russian earned her a posting to Moscow in 1971, the first female FSO to serve there. Over the next three decades, she served in Chile, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Russia again, Belarus and Austria. Having spent most of her life abroad, she designed and retired to her home outside Portland overlooking Casco Bay, where she could finally be close to family and enjoy a wonderful community.



In Memoriam

Oscar J. Olson Jr.



Oscar J. Olson Jr., 83, a retired FSO, died Aug. 28 of cancer. After Army service in Germany, he joined the Department in 1957. His posts as an economic/commercial officer included Venezuela, Spain, Mexico, Germany, Panama and Ecuador. He retired in 1984 and worked at the Smithsonian Institution and for the private firm Business Environment Risk Information. He also worked part time for the Department's FOIA office. He was an active member of the United Methodist Church, DACOR, Arlington Civitan and the Norwegian Society, among others.



In Memoriam

Nancy E. Pearl



Nancy E. Pearl, 92, a retired FSO, died Oct. 4 in Honolulu, Hawaii. While visiting Mexico in the 1950s she was hired as a messenger at the U.S. Embassy, and then rose through the ranks as a consular officer before retirement in 1974. Her posts included Mexico City, Tijuana, Guadalajara, Yokohama, Stockholm, Caracas, Kingston and Lima. Her mother, Letitia (Pat) Flynn Eggen was also in the Foreign Service.



In Memoriam

Robert A. Rockweiler

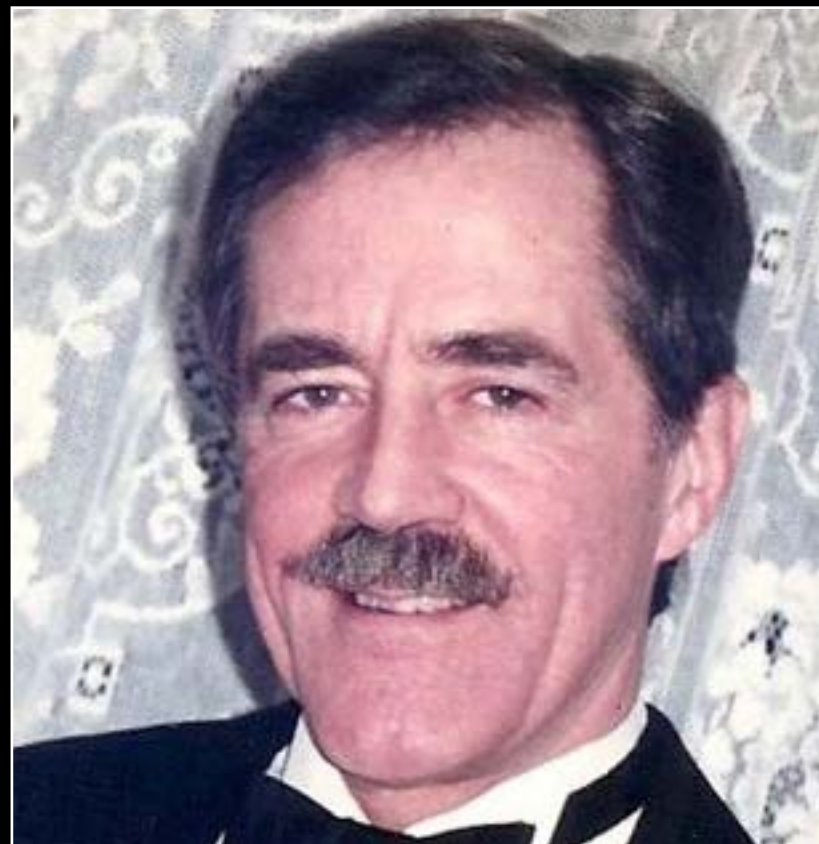


Robert A. Rockweiler, 88, a retired FSO, died May 30 in New Smyrna Beach, Fla. He served in the Army during the Korean conflict and taught high school in New Jersey before joining USIA in 1956. His overseas assignments were in Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, Panama and Ecuador. In retirement, he taught English as a Foreign Language at The George Washington University and Georgetown University. He continued to travel widely, having visited more than 100 countries. In 2009, he wrote his memoirs entitled, “Looking Back at 81 – a career in the Foreign Service.”



In Memoriam

Jack Murray Seymour Jr.



Jack Murray Seymour Jr. 75, a retired FSO, died Sept. 26 at home in Saratoga, Calif. He served in the Army before joining the Department in 1967. His overseas posts included Yugoslavia, Poland, Germany and Belgium. In charge of Polish affairs at State, he guided U.S. policy regarding Polish compliance on human rights issues at the time of the Helsinki Accords. After retirement in 1984, he served with several foreign policy think tanks in Washington, D.C., including as a fellow at the Wilson Center. He enjoyed fencing, skiing and swimming, as well as the arts, literature and history.



In Memoriam

John Ervin Witt



John Ervin Witt, 80, a retired FSO, died March 6 in Northern California. He served in the Army before joining the Department in 1961. His overseas posts included Ankara, Recife (Brazil), Tripoli, Addis Ababa, Tegucigalpa, Guatemala City, Shanghai, Monterrey and Chengdu, where he was on the staff that opened the first U.S. diplomatic post in Western China. His final posting was Hong Kong before retiring in 1990. He was contracted for temporary assignments, including to Xian, China, for President Clinton's visit.



End State



A woman paddles a pirogue past Makoko, a massive impromptu city, most of which is built on stilts above Lagos Lagoon along mainland Lagos' shoreline in the shadow of the Third Mainland Bridge.

Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco